Ordering the Everyday

Serial photography, repetition and everyday acts

Hanna Timonen
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Abstract

Seriality and the everyday are elusive notions that are nevertheless central to photography. This thesis examines photographic seriality as an artistic practice and a quotidian activity. The everyday is not treated as subject matter to be photographically represented; rather photography is understood as a practice deeply embedded in the experience of everyday life. I argue that in order to understand the ways photographic acts take place in the flow of life, an understanding of photographic seriality is vital.

Serial photography is approached both as a conscious artistic method and as a means of open engagement with the world, available to anyone with a camera. The work presents four case studies. Zoe Leonard’s Analogue and Dina Kelberman’s I’m Google are situated within post-conceptual contemporary art. In the last two chapters I introduce the artist Christina Holmlund’s N60°09’2 E24°56’1, a series of photographs that are taken on a daily walk with her dog as well as photographs taken by a local photographer from her window. In these examples, photography aligns with other activities like daily tasks, walking, gathering and preservation. The thesis combines close readings of specific artworks, artistic research and two interviews with photographers. The artistic component includes a solo exhibition at the Photographic Gallery Hippolyte in 2018, as well as two further photographic series that test how a situated practice of serial photography unfolds in daily life. The work draws from a range of reading on conceptual art, history of photography, photography theory and everyday aesthetics, specifically the work of Yuriiko Saito.

The thesis discusses how immediate perceptions as well as larger phenomena become conceptualised through serial photography. In conceptual art, this happened through conscious experimentation with language, performance, and performative acts: briefs and scores for artworks. In everyday photography, a similar conceptualisation takes place when experiences turn into photographs. However, everyday photography does not lead to articulated concepts or artworks in any simple, institutional sense, but further actions, emotions and gestures of sociability. In this way, everyday photography achieves a merger of art and life not accessed by conceptual art. Instead of a rigid system or order, serial photography can then be viewed as embodied engagement with one’s immediate surroundings. Looking at photography in relation to those undertakings that form the basis of everyday experience, the thesis ultimately suggests that serial photography can be approached as supporting activity that is related to preservation, maintenance, and care.

Keywords  everyday life, seriality, serial photography, repetition, habit, home, conceptual art, performativity, photography as practice, quotidian photography, vernacular photography, Yuriiko Saito

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Preface

Plane collection

I started photographing planes, not because I was very interested in planes *per se*, but because due to my circumstances I started seeing and hearing them. I was on my first parental leave. Anyone who has spent their day alone with a child knows that these days can become dull and wearisome, despite the joy one feels in the company of said child. Caring for a small child is essentially concentrating on the child, being constantly sensitive to their needs. It requires such intensity that many other activities become overridden and almost impossible. Even thinking clearly and for oneself is at risk, but at the same time one needs to be vigilant and constantly available. One is never ‘at ease’ but always on the threshold of a response: feeding, changing nappies, answering questions.

The days can thus become dull yet at the same time filled with tasks. The uneventfulness also sensitises one to things one has not noticed before, when busy with other activities such as work or meeting friends, reading books, studying. My days were built around meals, walks in the park, naps and not much else. When my daughter was one year old, I was still at home, and every day we went to the playground, and I would sit by the sandbox. It was during these long hours that I started to pay attention to small aviation planes that flew over every now and then. We had lived in the area for years before we had a child, and I had never paid any attention to these planes. If someone had asked me about the planes (for example something like “Are you not disturbed by the noise?”), I would have been puzzled by the question. I was hardly ever at home, and even when I was, I wasn’t walking around the neighbourhood. Once indoors, I wasn’t looking out of the window or putting a child down for her nap on our balcony.¹

Now I realised the planes occasionally passed many times an hour and their presence in fact was responsible for a large part of the soundscape of the area. A recurring phenomenon has always prompted in me an urge to photograph. Once you see something, you cannot unsee it, and reacting with a camera is to accept this, and start seeing even more.

I started to take photographs of the planes and learned to expect them. The sound came first, and it was important for me to learn how to distinguish planes from helicopters, and the speed of the plane, as well as predict its location once it appeared in sight. It was then that I could take up my Rolleiflex camera and get a couple of composed snaps. The planes were an event, but at the same time were

¹ Children napping outdoors in a pram throughout the year is a common practice in Finland. There is even a concept of the “balcony pram”, which means a little worn-out second stroller that can be stored on the balcony.
part of the texture of the atmosphere, as they flew so often, they were so common and ever present. However, spotting and photographing them set the temporality of the dullness in the realm of anticipation and then gratitude.

I took photographs. Would it become ‘a project’, or have more meaning or general interest if this background was articulated? What was I even doing? Was it art? Snapping photographs of airplanes for my own pleasure, to get pieces for my collectibles, to take the film to be developed and see how they turned out? And why was I doing this on film? What was indeed the difference between me as a person with an education as a professional artist, using obsolete equipment2 and anyone with a mobile phone camera snapping and publishing pictures on social media?

I took photographs of the planes, and soon I was able to say I was “making a series”. Another set of questions surfaced; why was I again making ‘a series’, a format I was taught as part of my education as a photographer? I had been making photographic series ever since, as it seemed impossible to do anything else. I would see something, start seeing it again, and then take photographs. Instead of trying to move away from the format, to give up producing series, I was compelled to turn to it, to continue to collect planes.

Photographing the planes was an escape from routines. I managed to do it among other duties, just by carrying the camera with me when outside, or running to take a photograph from a balcony when I heard one. This prompted the question of if and how I could look at photography as intertwined with other daily activities. Simultaneously, the serial repetition of collecting the planes started to become a chore and a routine itself, something that was not always pleasant but occasionally tedious.

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2 Here I refer to the film camera as ‘obsolete’ as an ordinary device, but very prominently used within contemporary art as well as among camera enthusiasts.
Figure 1 From the series Plane Collection, 2013-, colour photographs by the author.
Photography has a special relationship to everyday life, both historically as well as in current (digital) photographic practices – a relationship, that has been explicated in photographic artworks, as well as in theoretical writing. In this doctoral thesis I investigate this relationship between everyday life and photographic practices through the concept of seriality.

The questions that started my enquiry were essentially practical, to do with the everyday of making photographic works. What does it mean to make a photographic series, what does it mean in relation to one’s individual art practice, and what does it mean in the context and tradition of photographic art? Once I had started this thesis, I realised that seriality needs to be approached as an artistic method, beyond a mere form. As the research continued, it became relevant to ask how serial photography can be understood as a way to engage with the everyday as part of a wider set of activities.

My approach responds to the ubiquity of photographs in our day-to-day environment as I seek to find a way to articulate how a situated subjectivity is expressed through taking photographs. I examine serial photography as a mundane act that represents the everyday as well as structures our operation in and response to the reality of everyday life and its mediation through images. What I propose is that seriality is related to many of the ways people practise photography daily and through this has an influence on our daily life and sociability.

More and more people produce photographs on a daily basis, for whatever pragmatic or aesthetic reasons (and these often exist concurrently). The questions around how photographs are taken and used on digital platforms and the meanings of this activity have been accessed recently in photographic theories focusing on everyday practices in photography. This thesis makes a contribution to these discussions by analysing seriality and placing a focus on the contact points between serial expression and the everyday in a new way. I take up other daily activities like ordering, feeding, gathering and preserving and bring them into comparison with photographic acts. The thesis provides a synthesis of a variety of themes that circulate around serial photography, conceptual art, vernacular photography and everyday aesthetics as well as different theories that address them. I look at them through the lens of an artist whose photographic work is serial, but also just as a person who takes photographs in their daily life, as anyone might.

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In the following chapters I view seriality as artistic doing that takes place in one’s ordinary flow of life. The everyday as a cultural concept and as a theme in art on one hand, and the everyday as a lived reality on the other, can be viewed as two different things. My discussion focuses not so much on how the everyday gets to be depicted and represented in and as photographs, but on how taking photographs as an act is enmeshed in the ways the everyday and its representations are experienced. The latter focus brings up some embodied aspects of photography that have been most extensively covered in so-called non-representational or more-than-representational discussions.\(^4\)

While seriality as a method refers mostly to artistic practices or strategies, the serial way of photographing one’s everyday is a common act, and an ordinary way of engaging with the world for many people who have a camera. At the start of the work, the focus is mostly on artworks, but as I go on, I bring up quotidian photography as an important practice. The mixing, or, as worded by the conceptual artist Allan Kaprow, the *blurring*, of art and life is a familiar theme from conceptual art, and I discuss some conceptual strategies from the 1960s\(^5\) with a view to combining points between what can be understood as contemporary artistic practices and those photographic practices that take place in daily life. A question of how photographic acts are intertwined in mundane daily life is brought up. While artistic intentions might differ from instrumental or leisurely purposes, I would like to think that the initiation to photograph and the physical experience of photographing are similar.

My point is that instead of raising a question of form, serial photography opens possibilities beyond archiving, typecasting, topography or even artistic expression, and indicates a meaningful engagement with one’s personal experience of the everyday environment. It also takes part in the formation of social belonging. In my discussions, serial photography becomes not only an object of study, but my viewpoint through which I am able to arrange different aspects of taking photographs. I will use seriality as a conceptual method to organise the abundance of images and the multitude of ways photographic acts are part of everyday life.

Outline of chapters

**Chapter One** ‘Ordering and reordering’ maps out some questions around serial photography from the viewpoint of ordering. I will depart from the idea of ‘order’, which is one of the ways serial photography has been accessed in theoretical

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writing. I recognise the ordering dimension of serial photography and how this is tied to typologies but will discuss how serial photographic orders are related to the material orders of everyday life within which they are produced. I then move from an understanding of serial photography as typology towards artistic strategies in conceptual art. I will look at how serial photography was a method for conceptual artists as well as how this method made sense in the way these artists took everyday life as their inspiration and context.

From chapters two to five the thesis unfolds as a collection of case studies around the themes outlined above. Each chapter focuses on one artist and a specific artwork, and in each case I approach the questions of seriality and the everyday from a different angle. The choice of examples has been informed by my own, personal interest in each of the projects and practices. The artists all employ the serial form, they take photographs near their home, and the appearance of the photographs is understated, almost simplistic. They seem to embody something I have come to call an ‘everyday attitude’.

In **Chapter Two** I discuss the contemporary American artist Zoe Leonard's extensive photographic series *Analogue* (1999–2004) and how serial photography does not necessarily create a typology or a narrative but can be read as an expression of subjective activity in relation to what one sees. I start with an inspiration from a text by the twentieth century photographer and writer Lucia Moholy-Nagy and suggest that Leonard is adapting an ‘everyday attitude’ starting from home, which situates her artistic work in her immediate surroundings.

**Chapter Three** looks at another contemporary artist, Dina Kelberman's, Internet-based work *I'm Google* which brings up ubiquitous instrumental photography. I discuss Kelberman's project and how it invites its viewers to act upon a grid of photographs. This prompts some questions about the nature of digital platforms and how people use photographs online. I introduce everyday aesthetics as outlined by the philosopher Yuriko Saito to the understanding of digital image flows and current photographic practices, and how different kinds of imagery exist intermixed on digital platforms. I discuss this in relation to Susan Sontag's writing around the image world and motivations for making photographs.

**Chapter Four** brings into focus the way artistic work co-exists as part of the Helsinki-based artist Christina Holmlund's daily life as she took a photograph along a daily walk with her dog for the duration of eight years. This case study combines the understanding of a photographic series along the tradition of conceptual art as well as a perception of serial photography as an everyday, habitual activity. Starting with some tropes related to photography, such as hunting and collecting, I approach Holmlund's serial photography through concepts like habit and work.

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Chapter Five presents the final case study and is situated near where I live. In this chapter I introduce photography by Leena Hägglund, whose serial photographs I encountered on social media. Based on observations of her practice, I look at serial photography as a state of stasis and an expression of personal positioning. The photographic series is thus turned around and dealt with, not informed by an intention to make a photographic series, but as embedded in the daily life of the person who photographs. This serial action will be elaborated and viewed in relation to domestic activities, preservation and caring.

Seriality and serial photography

Photographic seriality is my starting point firstly because I think it is essentially a question of practice, and as such compatible with artistic research. Secondly, I see its importance because this form or method exists in parallel to the concept of the everyday. It is at the same time persistent, self-evident but ephemeral and elusive. Like ‘the everyday’, ‘seriality’ escapes generalisations or firm definitions, so embedded it is in photography historically, methodologically and as a method. The theoretical ideas and previous research on seriality will be discussed throughout the thesis and more thoroughly in relation to the examples I have chosen. This choice supports my intention to pay specific attention to those instances where serial photography is aligned with everyday practices and repetition.

Seriality is an abstract concept that is connected to a range of disciplines such as mathematics, music, literature, art history, film and media studies, sociology, gender studies and psychoanalysis. Each of these areas approaches seriality in its own way and has likely developed its own definitions of the term. The number of disciplines related to the concept suggests that seriality as a model of theorising touches human life as well as natural sciences in many ways. Photography is a medium that intersects these both, as an aesthetic and expressive medium of visual communication as well as an instrumental or scientific tool, and seriality is a phenomenon that is firmly embedded in photography. The way photographs can be copied and reproduced endlessly could be included in photography’s serial quality.

The academic attention given to seriality in photography is also diverse and focuses on separate practices and outputs in photography. It is difficult to imagine photographic works that are not serial at least in one way or another, yet the

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7 Umberto Eco, for instance, saw repetition and serial to be the case in post-modern mass media strategies (and eventually, art from any time) such as retake, remake and intertextuality. Umberto Eco, “Innovation and Repetition: Between Modern and Post-Modern Aesthetics,” Daedalus 114, no. 4 (1985): 161-84.
theorisation of serial structures has until recently remained somewhat latent. By this I mean that although ubiquitous, seriality has been discussed as applied to respective areas of interest or specific cases like individual practices, rather than a concept and a form in its own right. The broad understanding of seriality encompasses diverse manifestations of the form such as product photography, documentary essays and other narrative work, conceptual art or archival work.

An interest in serial and sequential display of photography has been expanding in recent years, including explorations of before-and-after photography and a focus on the photobook format as well as writings on the feeds on digital platforms. What is common to these is that they address the sequential display or organising practices of photographs. In their writing on before-and-after photography, Albers and Bear pay attention to histories of photography of which theories do not seek to make medium-specific claims: “The multiplicity of photography’s histories is no longer an aspiration; it is now a premise that underwrites scholarly examination of an extraordinary range of photographic ‘flickering’”. Possibly for this reason, seriality has been mostly accessed as embedded in photography through its histories, separate discourses and explications, rather than a readily applicable, clear concept that is specific to photography as a medium.

Adding to the current importance of seriality is the way the immediate picture landscape consists of serial image structures: Instagram, Google grids and so on. While the abundance of images and their flows on digital platforms is a topic well-explored in recent photography research, the serial nature of structuring images is not so well understood. When attention is paid to formal structures, it is usually the network that provides a more appropriate model in comparison to a serial principle – after all, images appear on the Internet, and images themselves are seen as inherently networked. Literary theorist Sabine Sielke has argued that while seriality has gained less attention, and while the network and the serial tend to appear removed from each other, they share similarities. Sielke describes their confluence in the following:

This synchronicity and evolutionary theory highlights the fact that processes of seriality foreground the complexities of temporality, of time not in the sense of linear progress, but as insistent recursion whose direction depends, at least in

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11 Bear and Albers, Before-and-after Photography, 1.

A network as a model combines a multitude of nodes and can present complicated rhizomatic relationships. However, as Sielke describes, serial processes are also ‘emergent’, and I think, essentially potential in describing not only photographs’ relationships to each other in a series, but the more complex interactions between what is experienced and photographed. Series tend to describe daily, repetitive activities more congruously than the network.

I will discuss the serial aspects of digital images online in more detail in the last three chapters of this work, and a closer discussion of the different serial formats such as the book and the grid will come up in different parts of this thesis, most explicitly in relation to Zoe Leonard’s work in Chapter Two. The first chapter introduces seriality from the viewpoint of ordering and makes use of the exhibition catalogue *The Order of Things*, and draws from a range of reading on photographic seriality including the archive as well as seriality in conceptual art.

In his article “Sources of Serialism”, Joel Smith addresses the difficulty of reading any series through an image-to-image syntax. Because of the diversity of uses, seriality (or serialism, as he says) should be approached from another angle, “that of origins and context”. This assessment helps to keep in mind the importance of selecting a focus, instead of trying to come up with a comprehensive theory of seriality. The task of this thesis is to approach seriality from specific points of view, and existing literature on seriality will be introduced throughout the thesis text.

I will essentially examine seriality’s relations to the lived everyday, claiming that, from a human perspective, photographic seriality is more than a form. It is a way to articulate one’s relationship to the surrounding world. The same could be, of course, said about photography in general, since photographing is often to look at what is in front of one’s eyes and photography’s relationship to what can be called ‘real’ is firm. I place emphasis on seriality, because serial activities and arrangements are particularly important in this relationship, and, as I will discuss, taking photographs in a series is in some cases inseparable from the experience of

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16 Smith concludes his essay claiming: “As the historical epoch of the bound page gives way to that of video monitor and touchscreen, the modes of ‘artificial unity’ that have been achieved through fixed sequences of photographs will look ever more like what they are: variations, diverse yet familial, on a defining activity of modernism’s period eye.” If, however, seriality is viewed as a continuous activity rather than a fixed series, this conclusion is limited. Smith, “More than One,” 28.
17 See Roberts, *The Art of Interruption*. 
everyday life. I highlight the points where daily rhythms and photography overlap or inform each other, and how the repetitive features of the everyday are echoed in daily photography.

A photobook has been described to operate as conveying a certain theme through bringing together individual photographs. A photographic series is a collection of photographs that as a whole tells something more than the sum of its parts. I have left out discussions on narrative structures such as sequencing of family albums, documentary essays or photo-novels, even though I recognise them as important forms of seriality. Instead, I consider repetitions of a motif in photographs, and repetitive activity in photography. I address the series as straightforward, a succession of similar photographs, instead of, for example, a constellation that makes use of the possibilities of varying many angles and framings to tell a story.

I take seriality to connote a practice, in which photographs are taken serially: repeating and iterating a similar subject, theme or concept. I focus on photographs that show something in a straightforward way and could be said to express a ‘deadpan style’. The gesture of pointing the camera towards something to depict it, without paying too much attention to alternative points of view or camera angles, tends to be because the photographer wants to show literally what they see. This style can be understood as vernacular insofar as for example family portraits, as well as instrumental images such as product photographs, show something. On the other hand, straight images, described by David Campany as “clear, frontal and rectilinear”, form an established style in photography books.

A photographic series is a visual, material result of the repeated activity of taking photographs. In this constellation, ‘seriality’ can be understood as an umbrella term for everything to do with the ‘serial’. ‘Serial photography’ refers to the practice of taking photographs, and ‘photographic series’ a materialisation of serial photography. Closely linked with seriality is repetition, and while they are not synonymous, they often overlap and can be used to describe the same action. In the words of Umberto Eco: “To serialize means, in some way, to repeat.”

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18 See Di Bello et al., *The Photobook*, 3.
19 The notion of ‘deadpan’ will be discussed later on in the thesis, particularly on pages 69–71.
20 I am using a definition of straight photography from David Campany. According to him: “Historically the connections between photography and the book have been closest in relation to what loosely we might call straight photography – clear, frontal and rectilinear. Here the subject matter insists in such a way that the photograph seems as much a cutting out of the thing or person in the world as a picture.” David Campany, “Almost the Same Thing: Some Thoughts on the Photographer as Collector,” in *Cruel and Tender: The Real in the Twentieth-Century Photograph*, ed. Emma Dexter and Thomas Weski (London: Tate, 2003). Also published on Campany's website, accessed March 2, 2023, https://davidcampany.com/almost-the-same-thing-some-thoughts-on-the-photographer-as-collector/#_edn5.
Sequence and series

Serially can be also approached through two categories, ‘sequence’ and ‘series’, terms that are sometimes used loosely and interchangeably. An insightful and clarifying discussion on the distinction between the terms ‘series’ and ‘sequence’ is written by Anton Lee in a review of the exhibition catalogue Ordering Things. For Lee:

Etymologically speaking, the notion of sequence inherits the axis of time from the Latin verb sequor, which means ‘to follow’. Meanwhile, series implies ‘to arrange’ or ‘to bind together’ as in the Latin sero. In other words, while a series is simply an assortment of individual elements, a sequence offers a durational experience of moving from one part onto the next.22

A sequence may present a temporally unfolding event, a durational progression of events. A series, on the other hand, could be understood as static repetition of items, particles or scenes. This distinction applies when seriality is approached as a display format or as a viewing experience. There are, however, grey areas between these two poles, and they can exist in tandem. I discuss this aspect in relation to the book format and the grid in Chapter Two on Zoe Leonard’s work. In Chapter Four, I discuss daily photographs taken from a seashore. The photographs form both a ‘series’, a comparison of different days and weathers, as well as a temporal ‘sequence’ since it takes place over time. It is useful to note here that both the ‘sequential’ as well as the ‘serial’ entail repetition. Equally, while an outcome or a visual explication of serial photography may be either a series or a sequence, both a ‘series’ and a ‘sequence’ are usually produced over an expanse of time, making them both durational at least from the point of view of the maker.

Repetition

Repetition refers to enactment and doing (or, in the case of psychoanalysis, the repetition compulsion that forces one to re-enact past events,23 but this is not the case here) but can be understood through a focus on the singular. However, the idea of singularity is at the core of a series as well. In a photographic series, each part is kept and held up at the same time. In seriality, the single maintains its singularity and importance while being part of the many.

Drawing from the philosopher Gilles Deleuze’s writing on repetition, the artist and writer Kim Schoen has written beautifully on repetition and the motivations around making a series:

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23 Repetition compulsion is Sigmund Freud’s concept that he introduced in his 1920 essay, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”.

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It is the very irreplaceable that concerns us. The making of a representation, or a doubling of such singulars, attests to the intense attention given to the singular in the compulsion to hold present that which is not replaceable.24

A series is then multiplying one’s object of interest and, possibly, love. It underlines and places emphasis on something specific. Serial photography is constantly hovering between the single and the many.

If there is one definitive claim that can be said about a series, it is that it entails more than one single element25, but of course ‘many’ does not always denote ‘serial’. “The photograph’ as a single aesthetic object has been historically a focus of interest in much writing in the twentieth century, with Roland Barthes’ Camera Lucida the most seminal text on the phenomenology of looking at a photograph. Nevertheless, more photographs than not were always a part of a larger set of images.26 Writer David Campany has paid attention to the fact that it is not often, hardly ever, that photographs exist alone without other photographs. He says:

We rarely make or see photographs singularly. They come in sets, suites, series, sequences, pairings, iterations, photo-essays, albums, typologies, archives and so on. Daily experience involves moving between one image and another.27

More recently, the researcher Michelle Henning has noted that digital imagery is perceived as multiple, repetitive, but that, “there is a risk, though, of this analysis of the digital networked image overestimating the stillness, solidity, stability and singularity of pre-digital photographs”.28 Equally, the discussion around the non-representational qualities has downplayed the visual importance of images online as they tend to be seen through either their multitude, or networked qualities,29 rather than as single photographs. The tension between the single and the many permeates our whole digital image culture, but it concerns the histories of photography.

In photography as art, the meaning of the one and the many has come up differently around different epochs. In their quest to define art photography, pictorialists in the nineteenth century heightened the single image as a response to the ease of production, multiplicity and reproducibility of photography. Putting

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26 Smith, “More than One”.
27 David Campany, “The Relation between Photography in General and Photographs in Particular: From One Photo to Another,” Still Searching / Fotomuseum Winterthur (blog), 22 April 2013, https://www.fotomuseum.ch/en/2013/04/22/from-one-photo-to-another/. This was part of a series of blog texts on Fotomuseum Winterthur’s platform. The single and the many was brought up on the said platform also in conjunction to Bernd Stiegler’s blog entry.
emphasis on the single image and developing techniques in making unique photographs, the pictorialists worked against the eternally reproducible negative and the ubiquity of mass photography.

In the 1970s, the conceptual artist Jeff Wall started working with photographs as singular, returning towards the history of painting as well as photography of the nineteenth century through exploring the tableau format. This was at the time a turn away from the anti-aestheticism and processual strategies of conceptual art. His work embraced the pictorial by presenting technically precise composed photographs as large-scale colour lightboxes.30

Working ‘in series’

Other contemporaries of Wall such as Thomas Ruff started making large-scale prints for gallery setups but would maintain seriality in their work and would “work in series”.31 In the 1990s, many artists working with photography followed this way of working. The Dutch artist Rineke Dijkstra’s seminal series of beach portraits can be seen as combining the painterly large-scale photograph with a typological approach. There are, of course, other kind of photographic artworks that have employed this kind of serial method.32

Schoen, writing in 2009, illuminates the concept of seriality by pointing to artists working “in series”.33 For her, their working methods oppose series as a system, articulated by the conceptual artist Mel Bochner.34 The seriality Schoen brings up is not a “self-exhausting system” as worded by Bochner, but an open-ended repetition of images, working “in series” on each image resembling one another to an extent that when the viewer sees one, they can expect what another one looks like. The series Schoen talks about are infinite. They work around a theme that repeats itself throughout the series. According to Schoen, ultimately this repetition leads to a sense of authorship; the repetition of resemblances then results in a “coherent body of work”.35

Authoring becomes here similar to authorising; namely justification for displaying certain photographs. If a photograph is an extract of a coherent whole, it makes sense to display it within the context of a series. This kind of working method can also be experienced as a demand from the commercial art world. From a commercial perspective, it may be simply tempting to present pictures from an already known, authored series, if only for multiplying revenue. Some artists have worked against such expectations. For example, a group of Finnish artists set out an exhibition concept One Picture Manifesto in order to work against

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31 Campany, Jeff Wall, 14, note 21.
33 Schoen, “The Serial Attitude Redux”.
the tradition of working in series. As articulated on the museum website: “The manifesto is also intended to encourage people to consider to what extent the form and even the very existence of photographic art is dictated by the parameters of photographic competitions, festivals and grant applications”. The kind of serial photography that is taught (or at least used to be taught) in photography and art schools has gained the status of a stylistic trope that doesn’t necessarily present anything other than a visual coherence.

All this aside, what does it really mean to ‘work in series’ for an artist? I want to pay attention to the fact that Kim Schoen, as well as many others who have addressed seriality, are practising artists. These include avant-garde photographer Laszlo Moholy-Nagy who, in his 1932 text *A New Instrument of Vision*, claimed that the photographic series was “the logical culmination of photography”. In the latter half of the 1960s, the artists Mel Bochner and John Coplans each wrote an outlining text on serial art. This brings up a question around if the topic of seriality itself is of a practical nature, something that is not so valid as a study of representations but imposes a pragmatic question for those who practise photography. What is seriality as photographic practice?

I will stay with Schoen’s text as it is a poignant reflection on serial photography, and in its attention to the subject matter, quite unique. Schoen refers to the insistent pointing of a series. Repetition, she says, “points at something: it is there, it is there, it is there”. What is central to her assessment is that repetition concentrates on the singular. She says, “Photographers engage a repetitive attitude towards the singular, the irreplaceable specific that is loved in the act of photographing it”. In repeating, one expresses an interest, “a loving act”, towards a phenomenon, an object, an issue, a landscape or a person. Photography as caring will be explored lastly in this thesis, as are also other acts and motivations that I find related to serial photography. The repeatedly pointing finger of the photographer is foundational for these acts.

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Seriality as a method

Serial structures in photography in relation to individual, social and political subject matters are constantly being examined and explored by artists who use serial techniques in practice and produce meaningful work. Some do this more explicitly than others. They use the series as a way to find out what happens by, for instance, observing a single spot to record unfolding events. Recent examples would be the British artist Stephen Gill and his work *The Pillar,* or Hayahisa Tomiyasu’s book presenting a ping pong table, the former following animal life on a pillar in the countryside with the help of a motion-sensor camera, the latter following daily life through a window as people gather around a ping pong table in a park.

How would one then start interpreting seriality as expression? My purpose is not to develop an overarching theory of seriality, but to concentrate on how it relates to an understanding of the relationship between photography and the everyday as a lived reality. Aligning repetition as an everyday experience with serial photography as a practice, I underline the connections between the repetitive and rhythmic structures of everyday experience and serial expression. This thesis moves from serial art and photography as artistic methods to a more down-to-earth understanding of serial photography not as a system or order, but a practice tied to quotidian experience. What are the connections between everyday life and seriality as a method? How do they manifest themselves in artistic practices as well as in vernacular photography? How do the repetitive structures of life come into contact with photographing as an activity that takes place in the everyday?

What is common to the photographic projects presented in my work is that they are explications of ordering and re-ordering, and that they are expressive of an ‘everyday attitude’. In their work, the photographers make sense of the actual world and of the image world which both form the basis of the fabric of our everyday. In placing photographic acts, both artistic and non-artistic, in the realm of the everyday, we can open a discussion up to everyday aesthetics, in order to understand the embodied aspects of photography, its relationship to the everyday and the social feelings of connecting it awakes while maintaining a more traditional aesthetic view of photography as a sensational, mostly visual medium. What kind of sensations are involved, and how can the experience of photography as a spatial, embodied practice be articulated?

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The everyday

As noted by many theorists of the everyday, the everyday and the familiar are elusive concepts that are difficult to pin down and articulate. To start to write about the everyday, is to first acknowledge this elusiveness. The philosopher of everyday aesthetics Yuriko Saito notes, “Many of us feel as if we know what it is, but articulating it is another matter.” Literary critic Rita Felski claims, “Everyday life is synonymous with the habitual, the ordinary, the mundane, yet it is also strangely elusive, that which resists our understanding and escapes our grasp.” It is probably somewhat clear to me what my everyday consists of at this particular moment in life; other people's everyday is different. The everyday is experienced subjectively, and in relation to individual contexts as well as tied to different moments in life. An everyday can be also local in the sense that one experiences it differently in different areas of one's life, for example, the everyday of working life is different from the everyday when on a vacation.

As cultural theorist Ben Highmore has suggested, the everyday does not need to be accepted as transparent, but it is “a contested and opaque terrain”, meaning that it is a field that is both problematic and potential. Equally, Michael Gardiner, in his compilation of writings on the everyday, stresses that “one of the primary goals of the theorists discussed here is to problematize everyday life, to expose its contradictions and tease out its hidden potentialities, and to raise our understanding of the prosaic to the level of critical knowledge”. My approach to everyday life is more descriptive than critical – at least in the sense of problematising. However, I make a careful analysis of the possibilities of everyday photography and emphasise the situated position of the photographer as well as the importance of the mundane, and sometimes undervalued practices. What comes to be dealt with and brought to light, are the potential and aesthetic aspects of ordinary photographic activity.

I read the theories of everyday life in so far as they concern the discussion on the examples I have chosen. Throughout, I make references to modern twentieth century thinkers like Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau, where applicable, also to highlight possible limitations of some of their ideas. My central attention is on the everyday aesthetics that has been developed by philosophers such as Yuriko Saito and Thomas Leddy in the twenty-first century as well as in feminist writing on the everyday. I will provide a more detailed introduction to the literature on everyday aesthetics in Chapter Three as I turn my focus to how current photographic practices that take place in the everyday can be thought.

46 Saito, Aesthetics of the Familiar, 10.
48 A person’s everyday is of course also tied to different stages and ages in life. Saito, Aesthetics of the Familiar, 10.
I think it is important to acknowledge that my focus on practices such as photography as daily activity help to illuminate the different aspects of the everyday, even though this illumination might be more ambiguous than rigorous. My examples deal with the everyday from a subjective point of view. The focus in this thesis is then more towards bringing up particularities instead of creating general propositions. I approach the everyday as a concept not only through written theory, but with the help of visual and artistic examples like, for example, the conceptual artist On Kawara’s work which conceptualises the experience of the everyday. A close reading of different visual practices offers a pragmatic, and possibly at times a more accurate, understanding of the everyday than theoretical analysis. Also, my own photographic work represents daily experience as it unfolds: repetitive structures, time and heightened observations make up the photographic output of the series *In the Year 2021 / Orders*, published in the appendix of this work.

What I mean by the everyday in this thesis is practices that are situated in the immediate environment of the subjects and are woven into their daily activities. Everyday photography here means addressing that immediate environment in a way that does not aim to turn it into spectacular or carefully constructed representations but stays within the sphere of the familiar and ordinary. Everyday life, as it is lived in the flow of time, consists of habits, natural cycles and repetitions, as well as, on another register, heightened moments, abrupt happenings, accelerations and pauses. Serial photography operates in a similar tension: one is caught in repetition of similar notions, but each photograph in a series can be thought on its own, and even when repetitive, each moment one photographs is experienced as unique and singular.

I highlight serial photography’s non-spectacular and repetitive qualities as opposed to photography expressing spectacular and standout events. The spectacular and the monotonous are not necessarily opposites, their differences are not clear-cut, and the two don’t rule each other out. The ordinary and the extraordinary are entwined in everyday experience. This division, however, is useful when making a gendered reading in the following explorations as I bring up some tropes and historical conceptions of what has been considered noteworthy and interesting. I align this with a division into domestic and public life, which have historically been seen through a gendered difference.\(^51\) Ben Highmore refers to literary critic Naomi Schor’s division into a ‘feminist’ and a ‘masculinist’ account of the modern, the home and the street, which, while the division does not claim the exclusion of women from the street or men from home, become “synecdoches pointing to particular orientations and evaluations of everyday life.”\(^52\) Because of these histories, it is in feminist theory where an insight and articulation of the meaning of mundane everyday tasks can be found.

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\(^{52}\) Highmore, *The Everyday Life Reader*, 15. This discussion comes up again in more detail in the last chapter.
Home

I pay special attention to the everyday from a domestic perspective. I take the concept of home as an everyday site that serves as a nest for all the photographic processes and acts discussed in the following. Home is the central site (for those who have one) where, and from where, the everyday is experienced. Home is a place where one can find comfort, and from which the outside world is experienced, a place like that described by geographer Yi-Fu Tuan: “all human societies have bases where the weak may stay and the fit may move out to gather, hunt, or fight”. Home can thus be defined by certain biological needs of humans, but is a space charged with cultural values and meanings. It is as much related to the body as to the cultural and social contexts that inscribe that body. Home is a place where repetitive domestic tasks take place, as well as biological, automated routines such as waking up. I bring overall a focus on those acts, events and sensations that belong to the temporality of non-spectacular, and home activities and housework are prominent examples.

I treat home as a physical location of the individual as well as a symbol of that individual position. Some of the examples I write about take home as their departure, but I will also take domestic activities, mostly understood as feminine practices, as examples of how everyday life is experienced and structured. This will become clear particularly in Chapter Five, when I discuss photography as an everyday act that resembles domestic practices in the way it takes part in preserving and maintaining. The concept of home as a starting point for photography will be theorised more thoroughly in Chapter Two as I explicate its meaning as a situated position for the photographer. In Chapter Five I discuss home as a locus for taking photographs and tie these ideas of home-based practices to homemaking and preservation as introduced by Yuriko Saito, Rita Felski and the philosopher Iris Marion Young.

The domestic as a site for photography has been accessed mostly through family photography, as well as in art through representations of home. Photography research also includes explorations into how home life and domestic work can be

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53 As pointed out by Rita Felski in Felski, Doing Time, 85.
54 Yi-Fu Tuan, Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1989), 137.
55 While the distinction into men and women, or men’s and women’s work, can be challenged, and a more inclusive approach beyond gender binaries adopted, housework has been traditionally associated with women, and statistically it is still women who bear most of the responsibility for childcare and household activities.
examined through the lens of photography.\textsuperscript{57} In the case studies I present here, the photographers do not turn their attention towards depicting home life. Instead, they focus on what can be experienced and photographed from home.

\section*{Repetition, seriality and the everyday}

The links between everyday life and serial photography are explored in this thesis by approaching both photography that can be put in the category of ‘art’ as well as vernacular, or quotidian, photography. In recent years, the discussion around amateur, or vernacular, practices has been brought up to a broader extent than previously, which in part is called for in the discussions on digital environments. Vernacular photography and mass photography are recognised as a vast practice that takes place in the social, political and personal spheres.\textsuperscript{58} These critical assessments help to access the relationship between vernacular photography and art as manifold and with potential. What is of interest here is in which ways they are related and interact, as well as the ways in which they differ. What is common, in my view, however, is that both amateur and professional photography take place in the immediate everyday of their practitioners.

It is a question as well, how seriality has sometimes more to do with material contingencies than artistic choice. This is particularly the case with instrumental and vernacular projects, whose serial nature is, in the words of Geoffrey Batchen, “a consequence of technical and commercial necessity, not of the photographer’s desire for taxonomic order or an interest in the aesthetic possibilities of repetition”.\textsuperscript{59} It also then becomes important in my work to pay attention to the extent to which seriality and order are read and interpreted in existing photographic oeuvres, compared to the extent to which they are intended in the making.

Turning away from the exhibiting and publishing contexts, the boundaries of art and non-art can be further called into question in the area of their production, as I will suggest that an ‘everyday attitude’ is adopted by many artists and quotidian photographers alike. The attitude or bearing towards the world and photographing, I suggest, is similar to both and entails first a desire to respond to everyday matters photographically, and then photographic activity to take place in that same realm of the everyday. The questions about ‘everydayness’ as a condition for taking photographs as opposed to the everyday as a subject matter for photography will

\textsuperscript{57} Clare Gallagher has written extensively about domestic work and photography as well as used photography to pay attention to what is sometimes hidden in “the habitual mode of everyday life”. Clare Gallagher, “The Second Shift: Making Visible the Unseen Work of Home” (doctoral thesis, Ulster University. Belfast School of Art, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences, 2020), accessed November, 2020, https://pure.ulster.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/the-second-shift-making-visible-the-unseen-work-of-home.


come up specifically at the end of Chapter Three, when I discuss them in relation to Yuriko Saito’s take on contemporary art and the everyday.

Research approach and design

The way I have accumulated insights and materials for this thesis is based on observations as a practitioner, and as a person interested in my own photographic acts as well as those of others. My research methods involve close readings of specific artworks, written reflection on my own experience of taking photographs and two semi-structured research discussions with people who take photographs.

I came across the work of both photographers presented in the last two chapters in my daily life, incidentally, as I observed my surroundings. Because I was doing research on serial photography and the everyday, I was sensitive to such practices. This means that in the same way as I would notice interesting visual ephemera around me as a photographer, as a researcher I was drawn to phenomena that I saw as relevant to my research. This method is in keeping with the themes and the setup of the research: what is experienced and seen repeatedly in the flow of everyday life has significance. The experiences become reframed and examined through paying close attention by taking photographs or by research and writing. As the research developed, it became clear that because the topic of serial photography is so diverse, it is best approached with a focus on singular examples. The particular case studies as a structuring of chapters helped to access and deal with the different aspects of serial activities. While the cases are singular practices, they also prompt and open up new insights into the broader notion of serial photography as an everyday, embodied practice.

On the other hand, I chose these two people because their photographs were interesting to me in the same way as other visual examples that are presented in this work. I perceive my own attitude in writing this thesis as a position of a ‘fan’. Fans are often amateurs, but not necessarily. The art historian Catherine Grant describes eloquently a positioning from a fan’s perspective in her article “Fans of Feminism”. She outlines an idea of a fan attitude for artists and herself as an art historian. I follow her example. The idea of the fan serves in my work to articulate an approach that is based on personal preference, admiration, and interest. This approach may illustrate the research design, in which I have chosen examples for the study from my own areas of interest and read them through a subjective position. Grant refers to Henry Jenkins’ ideas of fans as “rogue readers” or “excessive readers”. Grant sees fan writing as transformative but while I am not rewriting the works I am discussing, I might be, in the tradition of fan fiction, speculating and elaborating my own sentiments in the close reading I make of the works I have chosen.

In fandom, the pre-set roles of “a researcher”, art historian, artist, and fan, become blurred categories, and are placed “in-between sites”. In this case while I am a fan of the cases I discuss, I also align my own practice to theirs, seeing similarities and common nodes with their serial photography. This kind of position would situate my view not as an outsider, a researcher looking from the outside in, but a practitioner, who seeks to include the objects of their study in the understanding of their own subjectivity. Moreover, like Grant writes, “The figure of the fan, then, combines the reader with the writer, and sees the fan object as a key component in the formation of the fan’s own identity.”

Subjectivity

A subjective research attitude is not anything new and has been acknowledged in the ethnographic field. For instance, writing on writing as a method of research, Laurel Richardson and Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre note that qualitative writers can “have plenty to say as situated speakers, subjectivities engaged in knowing/telling about the world as they perceive it”. This means that a researcher does not need to adopt an outside position to what they research, nor do they need to know everything about their subject.

Particularly in artistic research, or practice as research, the close relationship of the researcher to their subject is acknowledged. As articulated by Robin Nelson, “A modern sense of ‘standpoint epistemologies’ leads researchers to reflect upon their own ideology and values (‘where they are coming from’) in relation to the cultural practices of the object of study.” Feminist discourse on epistemologies and ethics acknowledges the importance of knowledge that is local and tied to specific situations and perceiving subjects. As proposed by Judith Preissle and Yuri Han on feminist ethics:

Calling into question presuppositions about the nature of human beings, about the efficacy of positivist and postpositivist research models, and about the relationship of knower to known, these feminist thinkers propose alternative ways to define, create, and assess human knowledge. Among these alternatives are more tightly connecting knowledge with who makes it and how they do so.

In their writing on research ethics, Preissle and Han call for making the position of the researcher transparent. In the line of this thinking, I wish to

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61 Grant, “Fans of Feminism,” 269.
62 Grant, “Fans of Feminism,” 271.
explicate my status as a white, middle-class, middle-aged woman from a Nordic country. With an education as a photographer and as an artist, and conducting doctoral research in a university setting, I approach my study from this position. I live in a residential, or suburban, area in Helsinki, and my artistic practice has been for a long time based in my immediate surroundings. Defining myself as a fan allows me to describe the curiosity and admiration towards my subjects, while also acknowledging that my interpretations have at times been saturated by my own enthusiasm for my case studies. It also plays a part in my self-reflection on my research methods.

Grant describes the fan attitude as transformative: “The passionate attachment to the object of interest is one that is not passive, but instead alters the object to suit the fan’s needs, taking a fascination for something as a starting point …”66 It thus becomes a challenge to negotiate my own interpretations, especially in relation to the people whom I have interviewed. While the ideal of “objectivity” cannot be maintained67 in this kind of study, I think it is important to stay sensitive to what is actually said. Research as a process creates a setting in which something is researched. Even though adopting a subjective research attitude, there still is an object of research, which should not be treated as something it is not. As proposed by Juha Varto writing about artistic research:

> While recognising a phenomenon as an object of research and, as such, separate from everything else turns the phenomenon into something else than what it, in itself could be, one of the tasks of research is to restore the phenomenon to what it, perhaps, is.68

I take this to mean that since the phenomenon I research becomes an object of interest because of the qualities it might have in relation to my questions, I need to stay attentive to things that might be different than I expected. In my thesis context: how have I represented, for example, the two people I interviewed, and how well have I listened, understood their position and taken care of their particularity?

### Research ethics

The research discussions in this work were conducted with the informed consent of the participants, and the subjects of both Chapters Four and Five had a chance to read the chapter concerning their work and to comment on it. Anonymisation was not possible in this situation, as my interest was directed on specific practices.

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67 And, of course it is questionable whether any research is purely objective.

I interviewed both as authors and experts of their own artistic practice, rather than as anonymous subjects of research.

Ethical considerations were made, particularly since Leena Hägglund—whose photographs I write about in Chapter Five—is not a professional practitioner or a trained artist yet her work was public and made available to a wide audience. The division into public and private is at stake on social media platforms. For instance, Ben Highmore mentions the phrase “public intimacy” as something that relates closely to the way private life is on public display in our current digital environment.\(^\text{69}\) When people share aspects of their life on public and semi-public platforms, it is not always clear how well they pay attention to and are aware of the extent of the publicity. The question around the private and the public will be touched upon in my discussion of home and the street as particular spaces where photography is played out. Moreover, the division into, or even the confusion over, the private and public became a tangible issue in considering how to present people in this research, and the questions around research ethics.

In a research context, the anonymisation of participants is an important principle. In the case of photographic sharing, another right of the participant, the copyright of their work, must also be protected. This may provide a clash, specifically in cases where participants share personal information. Before conducting the interviews in 2021 I considered the guidelines of TENK,\(^\text{70}\) and concluded that an ethical review was not needed; the subject was given information on the research, she is not underaged, she will not be subjected to emotional or physical stress, or exposed to harm.

I consider Hägglund’s sharing of images not only as activity of socialising but as artistic expression, although they don’t have an institutional framing, and she herself does not mention art in relation to her practice. Through aligning my own practice with hers, I aim to fill the possible discord between myself as a researcher and her as an amateur. The reason I first came to be interested in her photography was that I could recognise myself and my own impulses in her practice. We share the same residential area, and interest in the immediate environment and its many delightful moments. Of course, she is the owner of her life, views and photographs. I have tried to represent her practice as truthfully as possible.

**Artistic research**

Artistic research faces expectations from the institution of research, as well as from research institutions like universities. Artistic research has been subject to many formulations and discussions in the last couple of decades. Despite these debates and the multitude of approaches and definitions of the question: “What

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\(^{69}\) Highmore, *Ordinary Lives*, 16.

is artistic research?”, it is the task of each researcher to define what role ‘art’ or ‘practice’ takes in their research. In this work, my photographic practice provided the ground where the research was initiated. In the course of my research, taking photographs became an aide to thinking and making different observations on the topics of this thesis.

I pay attention to how artistic research is located at the point where everyday existence, taking photographs, thinking through art and research meet. The curator and writer Lucy Cotter has called for a need to ‘reclaim’ artistic research, suggesting that a rigid distinction between artistic research and art is not necessary. Her text, an editorial for the journal of art research *MaHKUscript*, addresses artistic research and art as societal and institutional phenomena. In the text “Reclaiming Artistic Research”, she gives an inspiring description of the possibilities of artistic research:

> I would suggest that the phrase ‘artistic research’ is capable of communicating art as an aspiration, an open-ended process and an open-ended object, which includes, but is in excess of itself as artwork. By not making rigid dichotomies between artistic process and output, artistic research potentially enables art to reclaim the day-to-day experience of the maker (in the widest sense of the term), for whom an ‘art work’ is part of a continuous (thinking) practice.71

My focus in this thesis is on the experiential nature of serial photography that takes place in the everyday. Artistic practice is based on ‘doing’, and when artists extend their practice into research, they draw from practical experience and expertise. In this research it means that first of all my research questions have been shaped by observations about taking photographs. For instance, questions related to situated subjectivity and home as starting points for photography came because of a shift in my own everyday experience (as described in the Preface of this thesis). Secondly, taking photographs has been for me a way to see if some of the observations I made through photography could be taken further. The photographic series *In the Year 2021 / Orders* presents such testing.

The history of art, as does the history of photography, knows a multitude of cases where artists have been inspired by ‘the everyperson’ and vernacular practices, and have either appropriated or in other ways incorporated this practice into their work. My interest in quotidian photography is probably a continuation of the same tradition. However, beyond appropriation or fascination with vernacular photography, what I suggest in this thesis is that everyday photography, when understood in its formative sense, that is, on the ground level of doing, touches

INTRODUCTION

artists, amateurs and professionals alike. They all want, in the words of Susan Sontag, to “show something out there”.

It is also a question of naming and categorising. Do I view my own practice as art, and why? How is it art, and how is it research? How is my everyday life part of my artistic work, and how is art part of my everyday life as an attitude? If the experience of the everyday escapes firm formulations, then it is also difficult to pinpoint what part of this experience has to do with ‘doing research’, or with ‘making artworks’. In this way, the everyday can also be understood as an experiential sphere, where different kinds of attitudes and positions, as well as ways of making and thinking, co-exist. Making art or, in Cotter’s words, ‘art work’, is a continuous process.

Writing on artistic research, Barbara Bolt has discussed the concept of the “performative paradigm”. She proposes that artistic research is performative in that it, instead of describing, does things in the world. Art embodies a ‘reality producing’ effect that has a power to generate shifts in thinking. In regard to this research, I would like to think about what artworks, or artistic practice, do in this thesis. Doing photography has informed my research on many levels, starting from the experience I have gained during all the years practising it, and resulting in trying to articulate that experience in relation to photography in general. It is, however, another matter to make this contribution transparent and legible.

The artistic components in the thesis include the solo exhibition Look Every Day at Photographic Gallery Hippolyte, 2018, as well as two later projects. The exhibition showed the photographic series Plane Collection, the moving image work Portrait of a Building and the installation The Bridge as a completed set of artworks. In turn, the two later photographic series, shot during 2020 and 2021, present a more nebulous take on photographic series and focus on photographic activity. Instead of being finalised, polished objects, both series form something I call ‘data’. By this I do not mean necessarily research data (although it can be by all means interpreted as such), but this simple and oddly accurate dictionary definition of the word ‘data’ as “information output by a sensing device or organ that includes both useful and irrelevant or redundant information and must be processed to be meaningful”. This formulation of ‘data’ seems fitting in relation to photography, which is, particularly in the digital age, about recording almost anything. The data people produce becomes then subject to different kinds of orderings.

The series In the Year 2021 / Orders started out as an attempt to adopt simultaneously a conceptual and a quotidian attitude. It ends up asking what kind of orders are imposed on us, and how do photographic orders come to

conceptualise material experience? In the Year 2020 is composed of black and white analogue photographs. Throughout the thesis text I refer to some of the notes and observations I made while photographing. All the works are documented in the appendix of the thesis. In addition, I have included a small selection of photographs from my ‘data’ to illustrate the main text.

Figure 2  A pointing finger, excerpt from Orders / In the Year 2021, a series of colour photographs by the author.
1. ORDERING AND REORDERING

Towards serial photography as practice

“Photographs can be used for both ordering and dis ordering the world.”

Zoe Leonard in conversation with Elizabeth Lebovici

Orders

The notion of order is one that is often associated with seriality, and possibly a sense of order is one that is most commonly read in photographic series. A photographic series that is a repetition of, for instance, similar objects, is an expression of organising, of ordering: of picking up an item from a (chaotic) mass and looking at it next to other similar items. It needs to be noted that there are also narrative orders that do not rely on comparison, but present a story, often chronologically. A photographic series can present a narrative: for example, photographic essays, and temporal sequences from a fixed point of interest. Photo-editing, practised when editing magazines or books with photographs, is necessarily an act of ordering items into a coherent whole, and one that is profoundly embedded in photographic practice. Ordering can also be found in other modalities such as family albums, in which portraits and snapshots are ordered, and later on in digital personal archives.

Closely attached to ordering, and hence to seriality, are typologies. Serial orders of photographs concentrating on similar objects or groups of people are understood as typologies, taxonomies and systems. These kinds of photographic series will be the focus of my inquiry. In this chapter, I seek to look at seriality in parallel to the discourse that takes serial photography as necessarily typological and I will also look at seriality in relation to conceptual art in the 1960s. As I will elaborate, repetitive series may go beyond taxonomic orderings or rigid systems developed by the conceptualists and instead can be looked at as an engaged and embodied activity that is set within the material, flowing and repetitive experience of the everyday. Serial ordering is a response to this experience.

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Ordering is at the locus of *Order of Things*, an exhibition and an extensive exhibition catalogue from the Walther Collection. The exhibition addresses serial photography through the term *ordering*, with works ranging from vernacular imagery from the nineteenth century through to conceptual art in the 1960s and contemporary photography from Asia and Africa. Ordering turns out to be coincidentally the method of curating and collecting, as the exhibition draws from an existing collection, rearranging and putting forward photographic works that are as varied as the artistic work by Bernd and Hilla Becher, J. D. ’Okhai Ojeikere, and Duane Michals, as well as different vernacular practices. Roughly drawn, ordering can be understood in two ways: conceptual ordering of photographs in art, or instrumental ordering of, for example, police photographs.

The exhibition is grounded around the word ‘order’, but much of the writing in the catalogue cannot avoid the topic of seriality, and it is apparent that what is being looked at is a collection of photographic series from a variety of practices. The certain ambivalence between ‘seriality’ and ‘order’ is perhaps telling of the difficulty of defining either of them. Looking at this particular ‘order of orders’, it becomes obvious just how common it is in contemporary photography to use the method of seriality, and that seriality is also inherent in archival and industrial practices.

What remains common to these projects is the formal way they are laid out, despite their subject matter, ideology or context. In addition, the geographical and political differences of the projects, here brought under the same rubric, might be interpreted as awkward juxtapositions of different artistic oeuvres and instrumental practices. It raises the question as to whether seriality or ordering as a focus of an exhibition – or a research topic – is simply too indistinct and wide. However, there is something in ordering and the serial acts that has meaning, no matter how varied in terms of discourse their actual outputs are.

I think it is useful to turn to what it means to take and make photographs serially. Is it necessarily a question of ordering, or are there other drives that prompt their making? At least I propose here a move away from an understanding of serial photography as a form or a catalogue. My aim is to approach seriality as experiential rather than encyclopaedic. I look at the ordering acts that in the course of this thesis will morph into something else; acts of responding to one's

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78. “Seriality” is particularly taken up when curating of collections, as it can be used to put together artworks that do not necessarily share other features with each other. See for example gallery exhibitions, accessed December 7, 2023, https://www.hauserwirth.com/hauser-wirth-exhibitions/5916-serialities, and https://www.eykynmaclean.com/exhibitions/the-serial-attitude.
80. This variety is briefly addressed in the exhibition catalogue by Brian Wallis and Christian Willis. Wallis, Baker, and Walther Collection, *The Order of Things*, 323.
81. These two are perhaps not the same, but often simultaneous.
everyday, defining at the same time the context for these acts, as well as echoing more domestic dimensions of ordering acts.

It is through repetitive acts that an order is produced, by repeating something in succession and putting things in line to follow each other. In her book on repetition and seriality in minimalist art, the art historian Briony Fer describes repetition as something that is embedded in our experience. There exist many possible ways of seriality and repetition, of which minimalism is just one example. Fer writes:

A series consists of a number of connected elements with a common strand linking them together, often repetitively, often in succession. But series, especially as they operate in art, rarely exist singly and are usually mutually interwoven.

Fer refers to Gilles Deleuze’s writing on repetition, which, according to her proposed “not one, but many registers of repetition.” This opens series as more complicated than constellations of straightforward lines of elements and suggests an overlapping of different series in an instance. What this means here is that to understand serial expression it may well be useful to try to look how different serial structures exist in relation to each other, and what are the kind of orders that are at stake in situations when a photographic order is created.

In a short text on photographic realism titled “Order”, photo theorist Bernd Stiegler suggests that:

Are not all important photographic oeuvres also or perhaps primarily manifestations of different orders? Does photography not represent an attempt to uncover and invent orders that lie beyond familiar formal categories?

I understand realism in this case to mean photographic activity that is directed towards ‘reality’, the immediate experience as it presents itself to a person. The first question Stiegler asks has to do with the way individual artists’ work can be viewed as an order, and that a serial constellation forms an oeuvre over its unfolding through artistic practice, where repetition eventually forms a specific artistic style. As for the second question, if photography would “uncover and invent orders”, then orders could be accessed as overlapping, layered and co-existing with each other and of which a specific photographic order is just one of many.

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82 Fer’s book focuses on a specific period in art, from the end of the 1950s to the end of the 1960s, as a formative shift from modern art towards postmodernism. She says: “[…] I think it poses the more startling question of what a world would be like without recurrence, reiteration, repetition. This seems a rather better question to ask of repetition than what and where is its cause, as if the answer could be somewhere outside of it, as if there could be a place outside of it.” Briony Fer, The Infinite Line: Re-Making Art after Modernism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 1.
83 Fer, The Infinite Line, 3.
84 Fer, 3.
I take ordering in this chapter broadly to mean photographic acts that re-arrange or impose new orders on existing biological, material or social orders. I also presume there are even more orders, hidden orders in a given setting that lie beyond those that are on the surface. Pre-existing orders can be brought into view through an ordering which, once imposed on a certain area of experience, creates new orders that reveal underlying structures, or propose new, possibly transformative or subversive orders. If there are orders that lie behind our mundane experience – which I am pretty sure there are – then re-ordering is also an opportunity presented by photographic seriality. I bring up some further views on mundane orderings in the accompanying photographic series *In the Year 2021 / Orders* (see the appendix).

**Archival and ordering**

A photographic series can be understood as a taxonomic system that brings up sameness and difference in the objects or people it depicts, and thus represents. As articulated by Geoffrey Batchen, a taxonomy “is a system of order (a uniformity of presentation) imposed by the act of representation, not a faithful trace of the world as it is”.86 The ordering dimension of serial photography means that world becomes represented through a concentration on, or even curation of, certain themes, motives, and objects.

The idea of taxonomic ordering is central to archival practices, which have been widely discussed in photographic theories, particularly in the early 1980s in discourses on photographic representations, in which the purposes of control and surveillance were seen as central to photography.87 In his seminal text *The Body and the Archive*, the photography theorist and artist Allan Sekula speaks of the concept of an “archival paradigm”. This paradigm, tied to the practices of police photography and the way (portrait) photography was an aide to cataloguing, was graspsable in instrumental photography at the turn of the twentieth century. Sekula describes this paradigm, which was ideological, in the following passage:

The shadowy presence of the archive authenticated the truth claims made for individual photographs, especially within the emerging mass media. The authority of any particular syntagmatic configuration was underwritten by the encyclopaedic authority of the archive. One example will suffice. Companies like Keystone Views or Underwood and Underwood serially published short pictorial groupings of stereograph cards. Although individual sequences of pictures were often organized to a narrative logic, one sees clearly that the overall structure was informed not by a narrative paradigm, but by the paradigm of the archive.

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After all, the sequence could be rearranged; its temporality was indeterminate, its narrativity relatively weak.88

These qualities Sekula lists strike me as something that could easily be written about any photographic series repeating the same theme. Items in a series can be rearranged, or replaced, as there is no temporal or narrative order. If I read Sekula literally, this kind of serial ordering of photographs, as opposed to a ‘proper’ narrative ordering, would necessarily allude to the archive. Because of an ideological grounding in “optical encyclopedism”,89 as Sekula puts it, serial arrangement itself becomes suspect. Organising becomes a tool for exerting power over photographic subjects.

In photographic modernism, it was in the work of the German photographer August Sander where the archival paradigm persisted, according to Sekula. Sander was, in his words, a “case in point” of the modernist photographers who “embraced the archival paradigm” as opposed to others who resisted it.90 In addition, almost naturalist (or positivist) ideas about photography have been interpreted to be behind other photography projects of the time that belonged to New Objectivity movement in Germany.91 Sander’s project, *People of the Twentieth Century*, offers itself as typecasting different German types, and because of this typecasting, the work creates separate categories so that individual sitters could be read as “tokens” of the same “type” of a group.92 It is emblematic of both the archive and a series that an individual image points to a larger whole.

I however introduce now an alternative, or supplementary, reading of Sander’s practice. Sander may have been a “case in point” in the ideological archival paradigm as far as he was influenced by physiognomy, and subjected photography to “correct seeing, observation, and thinking”,93 but I want to raise possible other desires and prompts behind his project, and the way his serial approach reflected his daily experience and mundane activities.94

89 Sekula, 58.
92 Eco, “Innovation and Repetition”. Here, I am referring to the way Umberto Eco has described repetition as particularly an industrial mechanism.
94 Sander’s project is, understandably, viewed through the discourse on portrait photography. For this reason, his work fits well in the writing on photographic archives and categorisation of faces. Sander’s work’s political implications between the National Socialists’ ideas and those of the Marxist left were also critically assessed by George Baker in 1996. While this and Sekula’s critique may have relevance, to see for instance Sander’s work only in terms of the archival is limited because it dismisses what would prompt photography in the first place, on the level of an individual photographer.
In his praise for Sander’s book *Anlitz der Zeit (Face of Our Time)*, 1929, the cultural theorist Walter Benjamin95 noted the fragile moment of seeing and then acting photographically. In his essay, “A Short History of Photography”, Benjamin wrote: “It was not as scholar, advised by racial theorists or social researchers, that the author took this enormous task, but in the publisher’s words: ‘as a result of immediate observation’”.96 I am struck by the phrase “immediate observation”, which Benjamin took from a text by Sander’s publisher, and presents as an initiation to the project. I interpret the phrase to mean that Sander had a desire to transcribe something that he perceived in the immediacy of his everyday, to capture photographically what he saw, to translate that into photographic language.

**Domestic orders and August Sander**

*The Citizens of the Twentieth Century* was a life-long, unfinished project, which Sander took up in the late nineteenth century97 and continued along his professional development as a photographer. This was not articulated as a specific project with a title until in the 1920s in Cologne, when he presented portraits of peasants in Westerwald to artist friends and told them the images marked the beginning of the project.98 This was also a time when Sander abandoned pictorialist fine art printing methods for straightforward printing without retouching on plain photographic paper.99 Despite the risk of being too speculative, I’d like to bring up the actual, material grounding within which he started to include people from all walks of life to his collection.

As the First World War broke out, his wife Anna Sander with the help of their children took up his portrait studio and worked hard when Sander himself was on the front.100 This history frames his photo studio as a business that was tied to his family life. Domestic life is hardly a concept that one would associate with Sander’s project – unless one viewed his vision of the Weimar a nationally domestic venture – but it is essentially embedded in the domestic and in the mundane of Sander’s everyday life. After the war, the need for portrait photographs grew, which kept the whole family busy. His son Gunther Sander recounts how:

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97 Birkin places the project in the nineteenth century. Ulrich Keller recounts that in the early twentieth century Sander photographed farmers in Westerfald, and it was here he developed a straightforward style which was welcomed by the people he photographed there. See Sander, Sander, and Keller, *Citizens of the Twentieth Century*, 14. However, Sander only announced a title and articulated the work as a project after the First World War.


A practically impossible situation arose from the fact that every citizen was obliged to acquire an identity-card photograph within the shortest possible time. His customers stood in queues before my father’s door, and he worked far into the night in order to keep up.101

The flow of people coming to the studio for an identity photograph was in this respect a large part of Sander’s everyday life. I imagine that the people that flooded his doorstep formed a familiar landscape for Sander, and that his activity of photographing people for *Citizens* was less a catalogue than a map of society. By this I mean that he became familiar and knowledgeable with the fact that there exists a mass of different faces, a mass he would then explore through serial photography. And it frames Sander’s serial ordering as an “immediate observation”, a response to the multitude of faces that would make up his material, ordinary life.

This is not to say that serial making doesn’t have a level of meaning, or that it is exempt from ideology. This is, rather, to point out, that the approach committed solely to the representational side of photography is limited and that, as there are orders and patterns that exist in the everyday, there are also serial photographic acts that respond to those orders through enforcing or resisting those orders. Sander himself aimed for neutrality, which can only work as a style rather than in actuality avoid any ideology, but his serial photography could be seen as a response to what he saw in the everyday, informed by his experience as a portrait photographer and from a political position that was ambiguous.102

Sander’s project of ordering the citizens and sorting them out was then grounded in an everyday structure, a domestic order, in the physical and concrete tasks that make up a working day. In addition, it can be noted that Sander’s own artistic practice with *Citizens* resisted the instrumental portrait form. His day job was to produce identification photographs for people who were obliged by the state to provide those photographs. Whereas his profession made him complicit in an archival system, his own archive is much more ambiguous in political meaning. If there was an existing serial order, it was the daily mass of people which he would photograph repetitively in his studio; a chore and daily toiling around instrumental photography. Against this order, nevertheless emerging from it, there was the other order, the artistic pursuit, that took him to meet people individually, and as individuals, in their own familiar surroundings.

Personal working manners may have also added something. Gunther Sander characterised his father as tidy: “… August Sander acquired the meticulous sense of order and precision which are an integral part of his work.”103

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102 Andy Jones has explained the political stance of the Weimar German *Mittelstand*, from which Sander seems to be speaking, and he describes it having contradictions. See Andy Jones, “Reading August Sander’s Archive,” *Oxford Art Journal* 23, no. 1 (2000): 1–21. Sander was part of a group of artists, the “Rhineland Progressives” in the early 1920s, and took some distance from the middle-class he had previously admired. See Sander, Sander, and Keller, *Citizens of the Twentieth Century*, 15.
Sander continues to recount how he learned to keep the darkroom in impeccable order from his father but suggests perhaps here that this commitment to tidiness was a feature of his artistic oeuvre as well. Maybe keeping things in order was pleasurable for August Sander? A pleasure he would then take in ordering the faces he met in respective compartments was a similar pleasure to keeping his darkroom equipment in order. After all, as Jane Birkin notes in relation to the archive: “As individuals, we are culturally programmed to sort – and to think by sorting and there is great unease in resisting this”.

Another level of understanding the circumstances in Sander’s work can be introduced by paying attention to his wife Anna Sander’s participation. Sander’s biographies recount that Anna Sander had much to do with the more mundane photographic work. The domestic work in their home as well was labour Anna Sander also contributed to their photographic studio. She created then a supportive ground so that Sander could pursue an order of free artistic life.

The Hungarian philosopher Agnes Heller considered pragmatic human life as a potential that needs to be acknowledged and taken into consideration. When she describes the basis of everyday life, which is the “minimum necessary if a person is to sustain his existence, support himself, in a given social setting,” she names repetition as one of the properties that make up the social structure. Repetition forms the basis of everyday life. According to Heller, “A single action is not a customary action; an object fortuitously handled once does not thereby become an object invested with concrete signification; a word uniquely uttered is not a word”.

Repetition is then meaningful as it forms a set of understandable actions, and repetition has a grounding in the daily happenings and routines without which thought could not exist. Sander, like anyone, was grounded in a daily life, which can be characterized as monotonous, repetitious, and conditioned by circumstances. What I want to bring up with this focus on Sander’s work is that photographic serial activity cannot be looked at separately from what it responds to. Serial photography can be approached not only as representations based on visual observations, but as activity that is entangled with orders that already define and structure one’s existence.
1. ORDERING AND REORDERING

Arrangement of serial images

Ordering creates typologies, series repeating similar items, which can be understood through a stasis in the way they don’t express movement. On another register, seriality can be described through sequencing, which then, as opposed to a series, connotes narration or temporal progress. The distinction into typologies on the one hand and narrative or temporal sequences makes sense particularly in reading photographic representations. However, the temporal distinction between photography repeating a theme, and photography that could be described as time-series is perhaps not so clear-cut. The two categories of serial photography are not mutually exclusive in many cases. For example, August Sander’s, as well as Bernd and Hilla Becher’s, serial works have been accessed as embodying both static repetition as well as sequential progression.

A certain emotional detachment is often associated with serial photography when viewed as ordering. Unlike cinema, a photographic series presents its parts as something that can be seen as a whole, but also as individual parts, and the viewer can go back and forth between these parts. Like the art historian and photo theorist Blake Stimson has articulated, “[…] the photographic essay is different from film precisely because it does not place each subsequent image on top of that which becomes before it, that each image in the series, each instant in the representation, is preserved rather than being displaced by its follower”. As a representation, a photographic series is never linear, but recursive.

The difference of temporal impressions can be understood through the way a series lays out a number of parts in front of the viewer instead of immersing them into a narrative. This is the case with, for example, the nineteenth century chronophotographer Eadweard Muybridge’s experiments, in which the flowing of time is sliced into parts that can be observed on a two-dimensional plane. In cinema, the viewer identifies with the camera’s point of view because of suturing. As described by, for instance, Rosalind Krauss, the suturing in film is: “causing the viewer to leave his or her externalized position outside the image to become visually and psychologically woven – or sutured – into the fabric of the film”. A series of images does not allow this kind of identification, but the viewer stays outside the image set, a position that creates a disembodied effect. This detachment

109 See discussion on sequence and series in Introduction of this thesis.
111 Stimson notes how serial photography has been seen similar to film, or a “precursor to film”. However, the linear way of progressing to a conclusion does not describe serial photography. The film is constructed of images that replace each other and form a “synthetic experience of continuous time”. Stimson, The Pivot of the World, 36.
from the narration can be an element in the way serial imagery tends to be read and understood as non-subjective and a subject to rational analysis.  

A set of typologically ordered images, laid in front of the viewer, supposedly does not invite the viewer into a narrative, within which the viewer could take an embodied position and identify themselves. Instead, serial ordering calls for an analysis and rational gaze. As described by Geoffrey Batchen, “A taxonomic system depends on the serial repetition of a standardized form of representation, making photography its perfect mechanism”. For Alan Sekula, the truth claims of photography were supported by the archival paradigm. It is, of course a question as to whether a ‘matter-of-fact’ photograph is any more factual than images of another style, and whether repeating them as a uniform series is epistemologically any more convincing than single images.

The serial approach, however, is not in any opposition to the subjective: there is space for poetics as well as politics in the expression of a serial system. Sekula himself referred to an ambiguity within archival and poetic modes, in the way the American photographer Walker Evans’ works “can be read as attempts to counterpose the ‘poetic’ structure of the sequence to the model of the archive”. But even here, the sequence presents itself as ‘poetic’, as opposed to the series that belongs to the ‘archival’. Because seriality as a method tends to pay attention to similarities between the things it represents, its maker is somehow always complicit in making selections that include and exclude, laying out those differences and similarities for the viewer to scrutinise. However, the maker of the series could embody a position of subjective engagement, and that engagement could also be extended to the viewer’s experience.

Conceptual art and seriality

Another time in history in which seriality, the everyday and photography came together was the 1960s. A large part of the rigour associated with seriality has to do with the way conceptual art relied on systematic language. In the same way as the avant-garde artists of the 1920s and 30s, conceptual artists in the 1960s and 70s took everyday life and the mundane, often the city streets, as their subjects and sources of inspiration. What is also common to these two epochs is that photography as a medium was embraced not as an auteur-operated fine art form, but as an instrumental practice. Photography was used in the modernist avant-garde because of its mechanical nature, which corresponded to the subject matter of industrial buildings and objects, like for instance in the work of Alfred

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113 This aspect is also brought up by Stimson, The Pivot of the World, 38.
115 I think there are alternative ways to describe a distinction like this. David Bate has written an introduction to documentary photography and brings up the poles of ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ photographs. David Bate, Photography: The Key Concepts, The Key Concepts (Oxford ; Berg, 2009), 51–59.
Renger-Patzsch. In conceptual art, the ordinary, affordable and easy-to-use technological attributes of photography were appreciated over refined aesthetics or technical mastery of the medium. For example, the conceptual artist Ed Ruscha described his photographs as “technical data like industrial photography”.

These ideas render photography an everyday medium to document and represent its everyday subjects such as modern life itself. The point here is not simply that the everyday was an object to represent, but that photography as a cultural medium was embedded in the everyday and had mundane use value. As an ordinary technological tool, it could be adopted as one of the ways to counter prevailing pictorial aesthetics, professional expertise in image making as well as conceptions of art. Therefore, photography could be used as a tool to reinvent art. Even though the results of these reinventions may be different in the 1920s and the 1960s, their similarities open up interesting links between seriality and the everyday.

Conceptual art can be understood as a set of artistic strategies that took place from the late 1960s across continents. Conceptual art imposed a critique towards the art world from the inside, testing and proposing new ways for making art. Many artists of the time used photography among other media. The conceptual artist Terry Smith has associated the terms “performative”, “processual”, “procedural”, and “propositional” with 1960s conceptual art. Seriality is part of these strategies, as it responds to the processual nature of conceptual undertakings. Photography was a medium that was taken up by artists partly because of its vernacular, ordinary status. Conceptual artists’ use of photography concentrated more on how images were involved with the construction of ideas rather than on pictorial representations. Some artworks didn’t so much express interest in photography itself, but rather art as a process, which photography could become part of. Some works played with the cultural conceptions and uses of photography.

A photo series was a way to break away from the single, polished fine art image that had come to dominate art photography in modernism. Photography was used to record ephemeral events and performances, and a photographic sequence was

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118 This quote can be found in Aron Vinegar, “Ed Ruscha, Heidegger, and Deadpan Photography,” in Photography After Conceptual Art (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 29-49, 34.
120 See for example Bate, Art Photography, 2015.
often an apt document of time-based events. Artists also made works based on performative ‘scores’ and tasks: self-invented rules that preceded the conducting of an artwork or photographic series.\textsuperscript{123} I will discuss performativity in this sense in more detail in Chapter Two.

In the 1960s, seriality as an artistic method was brought up by artists themselves. Most notable are the texts by artists John Coplans and Mel Bochner, because they explicate seriality as distinctive, as a specific concept. In his manifesto-like text \textit{Serial Attitude} (1967) Bochner states, “Serial order is a method, not a style”.\textsuperscript{124} He also brings another word to distinguish serial order from other forms or styles: attitude. Method and attitude are aligned as posing themselves each as alternatives to “style” or, taken further: form. Different versions of the same theme do not for Bochner count as being serial. Instead, he gives three guidelines for seriality: the work is ordered according to a “systematically predetermined process,” the order precedes the execution, and the “completed work is fundamentally parsimonious and systematically self-exhausting”.\textsuperscript{125} In other words, the process of the work is decided beforehand, and this ordering of the work comes before the work is made. The third guideline asks for a sparseness of the work as well as it being self-contained. The system of serial making is automating the process of doing work. This is the way many conceptual artists would work: an idea, a rule, then followed through in the actual making.

\textbf{Conceptual rigour and photographic series}

The way serial art was raised by artists in late 1960s was initially related to non-subjectivity. The way the artist Mel Bochner dealt with seriality emphasised rigour, and his approach was “anti-emotive and anti-expressive”.\textsuperscript{126} The conceptual artist Sol Le Witt claimed, “to work with a plan is one way of avoiding subjectivity”.\textsuperscript{127} Such an emotionally aloof attitude bears a resemblance, at least on the surface level, to photography’s deadpan style particularly originating from the German photographers’ Bernd and Hilla Becher’s work.\textsuperscript{128} The notion of the deadpan as a phenomenon in photography, as well as a style or an approach, will be discussed further in later chapters.

The terms introduced by conceptualists themselves might bring a clarifying frame to this. Forgoing now a more in-depth historical view of the dynamics and purposes within conceptual art or an examination of its historical progression much further, I would like here to bring up a division into \textit{analytic} and \textit{synthetic
\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{123}Iversen, “Auto-maticity”.
\bibitem{124}Bochner, “Serial Attitude,” 22.
\bibitem{125}Bochner, “Serial Attitude,” 23.
\bibitem{127}Quoted in Godfrey, “From Box to Street,” 26.
\bibitem{128}The Bechers’ work has been associated with conceptual art, although their work seems to exist across different categories. See for example Gronert, “Alternative Pictures,” 88.
\end{thebibliography}
conceputal art. The pair analytic and synthetic is a distinction that was originally made by the Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant. Drawing from Kant’s thinking, the conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth defined artworks as “analytic propositions”, meaning works that do not present phenomena outside themselves but rather contribute to the discourse of art in themselves as “definitions of art”. The problem with synthetic for him, which refers to propositions based on experience, is that synthetic art doesn’t go back to probe the nature of art, “rather, one is flung out of art’s ‘orbit’ into the ‘infinite space’ of the human condition”. Art shouldn’t be empirically verified outside its context. Kosuth claims, “Art’s only claim is for art”.

Conceptual art coincided with radical political movements such as feminism and anti-war movements, but the extent and how it responded to these movements is ambiguous. There was, however, a shift in the 1970s, when artists started to combine conceptual self-referential strategies to art while simultaneously looking outside a pre-given system of a series.

In his articulation of original conceptual art, the artist and writer Jeff Wall claims that, “conceptual art had only one objective: the reduction of art to an intellectual statement of the legitimacy of the intellectual statement itself as a work of art, not of literary art, but of visual art… and that photography had no real purpose in this kind of artwork. While this idea of conceptual art seems clear, conceptual art as an art historical term is used in most historical writing more loosely. It is here an issue to bring up how the everyday and social became conceptualised through rigid strategies such as conceptual seriality.

Martha Rosler photographed in the mid-1970s a series of black and white photographs in New York’s the Bowery, which was known to be occupied by homeless people, mostly alcoholics. *The Bowery in Two Inadequately Descriptive Systems* combines photographs taken of the street in the Bowery that do not depict any people with text panels that list multiple synonyms for being drunk. It is an example of a work that was influenced by conceptual art, but responded

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129 A discussion on the progression of conceptualism in the United States can be found in Blake Stimson’s introduction in Alberro and Stimson, *Conceptual Art.*
to documentary tradition of capturing heightened emotional moments\textsuperscript{136} with a removed, distanced look, which was then repeated again and again.

Rosler’s work gives an entry into thinking seriality as a form that can be used in a subversive, transgressive way, and as part of a social form. This entry could potentially combine the two lines of thinking of serial photography: the detached vision of the conceptualists and the socially engaged practice of documentarists working with photo-essays. Rosler herself explicates this connection in an interview with Benjamin Buchloh. She discusses her work in the 1970s and its relationship to on the one hand conceptual art and the social documentary of the 1930s on the other. She describes her influences:

\begin{quote}
The work intended a structural critique, yet without high drama or human actors. Only banks, storefronts, and empty bottles. The photos are really deadpan in that the building fronts are mostly totally flat against the picture plane, and perhaps that is derived from looking at Hilla and Bernd Becher, and Evans, if not the \textit{Twenty-six Gasoline Stations} approach.\textsuperscript{137}
\end{quote}

Through a deadpan, repetitive structure of photographs, a life, hidden because of the public’s distance from its subject, became represented and put forward as removed and distant. Rosler’s work underlines the ambiguity of a photographic series: it is an inadequate system for a description and identification. Instead, its meaning is unfolded in the process and repetitive acts that create it.

Many feminist artists of the time in particular took conceptual methodologies as a strategy to discuss gender structures, although many of the works were not considered ‘conceptual’ at the time.\textsuperscript{138} An example can be read in an interview between Terry Smith and the artist Mary Kelly on her artwork \textit{Post-partum Document} and in how Kelly’s work is often not seen as being part of conceptual art, but has been mainly understood under the label of feminist art. According to Jayne Wark, artists like Adrian Piper and Martha Rosler were critical towards conceptual art but did nevertheless adopt conceptual methods in their work. In her book on autotheory and feminism, Lauren Fournier also addresses the way feminist conceptual art combined political and self-referential:

\begin{quote}
\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{136} Single, dramatic photographs – also as part of photo essays – continue to be an established form of docu-journalist photography even today. A serial showing of not people in events but a catalogue of objects as indexically pointing to larger social and political currents has been more recently explored in documentary works such as Taryn Simon’s \textit{Contraband} (2010), visible on Simon’s website, accessed September 22, 2020, http://tarynsimon.com/works/contraband/#1.

\textsuperscript{137} Rosler and Zegher, \textit{Martha Rosler}, 42.

\textsuperscript{138} See for instance Best, \textit{Visualising Feeling}, 108, or Wark, “Conceptual Art and Feminism”.
\end{footnotesize}
\end{quote}
In addition to bringing together the conceptual and the political in a given work, feminist conceptualists revealed the potential to incorporate ‘subject-centred inquiry’ into idea-based art – which had, in the hands of male artists, prohibited such blending, at least in theory.139

The everyday is at the core of feminist thinking through the assertion of ‘the personal is political’, and concentrating on the domestic as well as the public, putting the mundane and ordinary at the locus of art making.140 What is relevant to my discussion is that the everyday as well as the home became a site for making art, and a subjective view part of conceptual strategies. Examples of these kind of practices are Martha Rosler’s *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, a “serial” deadpan video work of a woman confined at home, listing different kitchen utensils,141 or how Mierle Laderman Ukeles turned housework and maintenance into art practice.142 The difference between these two is that former is a representation of the domestic, whereas the latter presents art practice as interwoven with other activities. Nevertheless, they place importance on household activities both socially and conceptually.

**Ordering the experience of the everyday**

I brought up earlier the way August Sander’s ordering of people could be looked at against his daily life. In conceptual art, a response to everyday life through repetition was a conscious act, and serial photography played a part in it. In this practice, taking photographs serially and other serial artistic acts can be understood as ordering an experience. Often these experiences were already serial processes that the artists transcribed into conceptual imagery. Such an unfolding of repetition can be read in conceptual artist On Kawara’s daily paintings,143 a series of paintings which followed the repetitive yet successive structure of time. In the same way, his other work, *I Got Up* (1968–79),144 relies on a system of daily replay. In this piece the artist sent a postcard from wherever he was to friends or colleagues stamped with the text “I got up” and a time of day.

Through this repetition, Kawara created another routine, an addition to the naturally formed order of getting up: namely, that of artistic action. On Kawara’s

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141 Jill Dawsey has written that Rosler’s feminist work is often recognised separately from her works dealing with more public issues, but that *Semiotics* and *The Bowery* were in fact conceived at the same time, and they should be looked at in tandem. Jill Dawsey, *The Uses of Sidewalks: Women, Art, and Urban Space, 1966-1980* (PhD Diss, Stanford, 2008), accessed September 5, 2018 on ProQuest Dissertations, 152.
act can be looked in parallel to the situation it was created in. If getting up each morning belongs to those kinds of routine acts of the everyday that are automatic and natural, then the artistic act, the ‘conceptual’ act of sending a postcard each day and framing this as art, is ephemeral but dependent on its material origins.

Getting up is a material act, one that belongs to the everyday equally for anyone, including animals. The everyday as a site for operating is described by Agnes Heller: “Everyday life always takes place in and relates to the immediate environment of a person”.145 To include another repetitive activity in the daily waking up marks a shifting of register from an immediate reaction to one’s everyday to an abstract context. Both orders co-exist as the latter depends on the former: without getting up each morning, a postcard commenting on that getting up would not be possible. Sending a postcard is an act that represents social order, but repeating this action rigorously and framing it as art transcends these two, the immanent biological order and the social order, into yet another order: the abstract order of a conceptual artwork. On Kawara’s artwork, then, becomes an illustration of the transformation of a physical, immanent biological order that with the help of a social act transcends into a conceptual one.

In a similar manner, Laurie Anderson’s Object/Objection/Objectivity (Fully Automated Nikon) 1973 presents a photographic order that emanates from an already existing structure. While On Kawara’s daily actions present a private statement, Anderson’s series is set in the public realm and negotiates daily existence more politically. Her project is also more explicitly photographic. Equipped with a camera, she photographed men who made a pass at her on the street. In a text panel that forms part of the artwork she describes:

When I got back to New York, I decided to take pictures of men who made comments as I passed them on the street. I had always resented this invasion of privacy. Now, suddenly I had the means of my revenge. As I walked through the Lower East side with my fully automated Nikon, I felt armed, ready. 146

Here, repetition and seriality are used to describe an occurrence in daily life that was repeating itself, thus making the serial way to photograph an appropriate tool to represent something already iterative and recursive. These kind of repetitive photographic acts and serial presentation have the ability to highlight the apparent and what is under our eyes in a more effective way than single photographs do. Anderson’s photographic act was not just a representation of a recurring scene, but an active response to it, a reordering of a pattern.

Photographic activity, in the same way as in Kawara’s work, creates another serial order. Anderson’s serial act was subversive in the way that through taking the camera and responding, the artist managed to intervene in the recurring situation

146 Laurie Anderson, Object/Objection/Objectivity (Fully Automated Nikon), 1973, reprinted for example in Art in America, March 2012.
1. ORDERING AND REORDERING

on the street. The use of the camera transformed her from a passive object into an active subject. Through responding again and again, the situation was ordered in a new manner. If there was an order in the first place, it was the social order of certain behaviour on the street, which relied on a repeated acceptance of that behaviour. Those orders can be turned only through responding with a different kind of repetition, the kind that is unexpected. Serial photography shows itself to be transformative as a series of gestures that offer a new kind of order. Serial, repetitive acts, in addition to images, have the potential to disassemble and then reassemble the way one reacts to a scene, as well as what can be read or understood from that same scene.

In an exhibition review, the writer and artist Martin Heiferman describes Kawara’s artistic action as having a ritualistic dimension. He points out that Kawara and many contemporaries shared a belief in repetition, in which by doing something again and again, they “could make some sense of the world and come to understand how that sense ends up being represented in photographs." This view suggests that repeating an act helped artists to organise phenomena as well as interpret the practice of photography. Conceptualists’ serial acts, coupled with photography’s ability to “make sense of the world”, suggested that repetition, through careful pointing to an issue, would be able to create a separate level of meaning representing photographic action itself, rather than just images. This meaning is not only read in the finished images but takes place in how photography is acted out.

There is a historical understanding of serial photography as typecasting, ordering and cataloguing. On the other hand, there is conceptual photographic series’ appearance as a closed system, belonging to an ‘analytic’ way of thinking about art, rather than relating to life. These histories help to understand why serial art, and particularly repetitive photography, is not easily associated with subjectively engaged and emotionally expressive intentions and outcomes. It is a question here as to whether a detached, serial form necessarily connotes something disinterested. After all, not being engaged personally or socially is not synonymous with looking from a distance, from afar with a neutrality that can only be an appearance. A rule-based idea-oriented approach, then, does not mean necessarily a non-subjective position, nor does it mean that a systematic approach could not be combined with engagement with the political or could not express affective sentiments.

Serial photography is depicting while it is abstracting. I mean abstraction here in the way real physical and material conditions are played out as conceptual artistic acts, transcribing biological orders into thought, and everyday conditions into photographic series. The kind of practice I seek to bring forward is departing from the cool, detached look of minimalists, analytic conceptualists, as well as typecasting, even though the images and methods involved with this practice very much resemble the mentioned. How would the seemingly detached, systematic

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147 Heiferman, Martin, “Think and Shoot,” Art in America, March 2012.
conceptual method of seriality be understood as an affective and subjective as well as transformative modality?

A recent example that involves conceptual rigour, archival ordering and artistic action, as well as affective sentiments is presented in Tina Campt’s book *Listening to Images*. Campt discusses an artwork by the Italian photojournalist Martina Bacigalupo called *Gulu Real Art Studio*. This art project presents a controlling ideology being replaced by another, and affective, dimension of serial/archival photography. *Gulu Real Art Studio* (2011-2012) is an installation of Ugandan identification photographs collected by the Italian photojournalist Martina Bacigalupo, which presents images that are 10 x 16 snapshot format and present a full sitter, but the faces of the sitters have been cut out and used as passport photographs.148

Campt makes an interesting comparison between conceptual seriality and the practice of identification photography and archiving. Seriality is, according to her, articulated as a clerk’s activity in the writings of for example the conceptual artist Sol LeWitt, who set out to erase artists’ authorship of works. However, this series has no author, as it is a result of the conventional practice of identification photography. What Campt goes on to suggest is that even though the images, and the system behind them, seek to produce a coherent group of its subjects, the Gulu Studio photographs in fact do the opposite. Instead of forming a uniform group, individual difference is brought to the foreground. Campt says: “When displayed together, the seriality of these ‘leftover’ images register in dissonance with the uniformity and anonymity that the iD photo so effortfully strives to achieve. These images resonate well beyond the frames of the cutout faces.”149

Systematic seriality doesn’t then necessarily result in a rigorous system with no narrative but through the differences between each component, resonates and opens up to different directions. The possibility of creating a differentiated grouping of ‘voices’, an ambiguous layer, is imposed on the series. As Campt says: “Ironically, details intended to impose uniformity— jackets, poses, and backdrops—are now serialized enactments of individuality and difference”.150 These can be read as a new order, not one of control, but of the subjectivity of the sitters. This presents a new transformative ordering of an already imposed order.

Bacigalupo’s appropriation, or archival transformation, was an act that changed the reading of the original images and created another kind of order on the series of images. This level is not necessarily a level of ‘meaning’, although perhaps that as well, but a level that can be sensed and perceived in another sensate way than seeing. This frames re-ordering as a strategy transferring the sensuous effects of ordering systems. These orders exist beyond the simple form of photographic

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An order, as I perceive it here, presents an artistic take on reality, a certain acting upon it. This is what I mean with photographic series that are able to create something new that replaces an existing ideology or narrative. Not only is the archival paradigm transformed and overtaken by the photojournalist, but the serial presentation itself also forms a score within which an individual manifoldness can exist – suggesting perhaps that a system often deemed cold and aloof can dwell in an engaging and vivid manner.

The formulations laid out by Mel Bochner and John Coplans can be applied in discussing seriality as a method. What holds relevance here in Mel Bochner’s assertions is that seriality is indeed a method, rather than a style. But it is another question as to whether that method is precise, or whether it opens itself to reflect more haphazard and random sensibilities. A photographic series does not need to rely on a rigorous, prompt execution, as it can follow a more ambiguous action. Because of its focus on a specific issue, a photo series feels persistent even though the underlying temporal modalities can be random. Coplans expresses this kind of understanding of seriality, which he laid out in the text *Serial Imagery: Definition*, published as a response to Bochner in 1968. According to Coplans, “Series can be cut off at any point; re-entered later; or continued and extended indefinitely.”

Coplans’ definition of the temporality of a series is embracive. His approach leaves space for thinking about the poetics of a series, as it ascribes a kind of randomness. Despite the rigorous structuring and system, there is space for pausing the series, giving it up entirely, or taking up the same series again.

This kind of conception of serial time enables an analogue with actual, lived time. It might seem that ignoring the “rational sequence of time” would make this system less natural, and a step away from the logical turnout of the everyday. After all, the basic understanding of time is that of consecutive moments. Nevertheless, everyday happenings and actions, are in their daily flow subject to abruptions and re-enterings, as well as to indefinite durations. Series such as Kawara’s that happen on a daily basis, as part of one’s routines are one way of representing the everyday and reflecting the experience of it. A less refined and strict work is also able to do the same. The temporality of a series encompasses both the routinised and the unexpected of the everyday. This temporal ambiguity ties the photo series more and more to the lived experience of the everyday. The serial method could be understood, then, as an approach that allows one to relate the surrounding world in a meaningful manner, rather than mere systematic organisation of phenomena.

Conceptual art (the ‘pure’ conceptualism of the 1960s) introduced into art making the method of intention, rule, initiation and repetitive act. Seriality was considered as a particular way of making art, one that artists brought up as a concept in their writing, outlining its features and ramifications. The serial method was soon adopted by many contemporaries, using it to produce critical

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151 Coplans, *Provocations*, 78.
work. Even though conceptual art introduced a systematic rigour for seriality, this preciseness is not necessarily clear-cut. This influence is particularly clear in how photography has become a part of contemporary art.\textsuperscript{152} Despite the multitude of ways photography is presented as fine art, the traces of methods and attitudes of conceptual art can still be sensed in contemporary works.\textsuperscript{153} Words such as post-conceptual and conceptual photography have been associated with artworks of the late 1990s and early twenty-first century.

In conceptual art, the everyday became ‘conceptualised’, translated into concepts. The practices I present in the following chapters are all, apart from the last one, part of this tradition. Looking at the serial approach as a continuation of conceptual art but simultaneously as a break away from it, I will make an enquiry into how the repetitive act allows an embodied engagement with the world, and what are the consequences of the translation of the everyday into photographic series. The following chapters present photographic practices that are ordering; they are reminiscent of the kind of sorting out and decision-making that people do in their daily lives. However, I feel that none of the projects present any fixed orders or concepts, and instead create spaces and platforms for interaction and open further practices of engagement.


2. APPROACHING FROM HOME

Zoe Leonard’s Analogue, everyday attitude and performative photography

The amateur at home

Walking the streets, chance encounters are inevitable. Sometimes chance leads to an encounter with something important. During one Easter break, I wanted to work at the university library in Helsinki, but as it was closed, I had to walk on. Walking on the street, I passed a second-hand bookshop, stepped in and looked through the photography section. I picked up an exhibition catalogue for Lucia Moholy.154 I had been looking earlier through Naomi Rosenblum’s History of Women Photographers and knew Lucia Moholy only vaguely. She was a Bauhaus photographer and since I was in the back of my mind in constant search of historical female photographers, I took a closer look. It was a book of photographs; architectural photographs of Bauhaus as well as images of design products, but crucially, it also included a collection of Moholy’s writings on photography. These were relatively short pieces. In the index I saw the title: “der amateur bei sich zuhause” (the amateur at home), under which was a draft for a piece of text, from 1933. The text struck me immediately. Part of its appeal was that while it formally seemed unfinished, its thoughts were clear, and addressing the everyday photography I had been so interested in. Moholy painted a vision of the amateur photographer, whom I interpreted as an ‘anyone’, not necessarily a non-professional with knowledge about photography, a hobbyist,155 but someone who could take up a camera and start photographing their everyday life.

Lucia Moholy (born Schulz) was born in Prague in 1894 and made her career in photography first in Berlin and then in London in exile. She died in Switzerland in 1989. In the 1920s, Lucia Moholy worked closely with her husband Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, producing collaborative work such as photograms and the book

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154 This was Rolf Sachsse, Lucia Moholy, and Sabine Hartmann, Lucia Moholy: Bauhaus Fotografin: Mit Texten, Briefen Und Dokumenten, Gegenwart Museum (Berlin: Museums- pädagogischer Dienst Berlin : Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin, 1995).

155 The word amateur derives from Latin and means ‘lover’. Amateur can be described as someone who is devoted as a lover of something, but who is not skilled in the same way as a professional. In photography, an amateur can be technically skilled, but lacks an insight into the art world. For example, Julian Stallabrass describes different photographing types in his 1996 essay “Sixty Billion Sunsets”. In his outline ‘the amateur’ takes a position between ‘the snapper’ and ‘the professional’, and ultimately amateur practice is excluded from the way mass photography was subsumed in fine art. It is unclear, what Moholy means by an amateur, but I assume here, also for the purpose of my argument, that she is not talking about a devoted hobbyist. Julian Stallabrass, Gargantua: Manufactured Mass Culture (London; New York: Verso, 1996), 13-39.
Painting, Film, Photography.\textsuperscript{156} Moholy’s own oeuvre consisted of photographing Bauhaus architecture and design objects, and later in exile as a prominent portrait photographer.\textsuperscript{157} Throughout, she was a prolific writer on photography, and published the book \textit{A Hundred Years of Photography} in 1939, when already living in London. In her writing she was also interested in the social role of photography, although these theories are not present in the book, which is a photography history book for the public.

The text I am quoting is dated at the beginning of 1933, which means it was written in the year Moholy fled Berlin after her then partner was arrested by the Nazis.\textsuperscript{158} The machine-typed text in German is a sketch or an outline, not very long, and it begins with:

\textbf{the amateur at home}

the title can be this or similar.

most important is that it characterises the booklet’s contents.

the following question should be asked and answered:

\textit{what can and what should the amateur photograph in the house and kitchen?}

every person may he live in a posh mansion, or in a modest worker’s hut -

\textit{has a small world in his home}

but who knows this world, who takes care of it?

\textit{who lives consciously in his surrounding}\textsuperscript{159}

The text asks what an amateur can photograph in his house and kitchen. Moholy writes how everyone has a small world in their home. To speak from home is to speak from one’s own, particular position. To speak from the home and kitchen presents a situated vision that roots the viewing subject to where she is from. We only have our own vision to rely on and our own perceptions to speak about. This also means that the amateur speaks of something she knows, alluding to an epistemology brought through one’s experience.


\textsuperscript{157} A comprehensive discussion of Moholy’s contribution to Bauhaus and its promotion after the war can be found in Schuldenfrei, “Images in Exile”.

\textsuperscript{158} See Schuldenfrei, “Images in Exile”.

\textsuperscript{159} Lucia Moholy “der amateur bei sich zuhause, exposé,” masch. Manuskript, Berlin 1933 (3.2).

“der title kann so oder ähnlich heissen.

wichtig ist vor allem, dass er den inhalt des büchleins karakterisiert.

es soll darin die frage gestellt und beantwortet werden:

\textit{was kann und was soll der amateur in haus und küche fotografieren?}

jeder mensch –ob er in einem vornehmen herrenhause wohnt, oder in einer bescheidenen proletarierhütte–

\textit{hat eine kleine welt bei sich zuhause}.

aber wer kennt diese welt? wer kümmert sich um sie?

\textit{wer lebt bewusst in seiner umgebung?”}

printed in Sachsse, Moholy, and Hartmann, \textit{Lucia Moholy}, 77-78. My translation from German.
This kind of understanding of knowledge can be aligned with what Donna Haraway outlined in her classic text, “Situated Knowledges”. Haraway’s notion is that “objectivity” is presenting a white male gaze which is rendered disembodied and invisible. Dismantling of objectivity leads to her assertion that all vision is embodied. At the centre of her argument is that all means of vision, be they organic or technological, rely on their own way of seeing, and an understanding of how “these visual systems work, technically, socially, and psychically ought to be a way of embodying feminist objectivity”.

For the purpose of this chapter, I take the question of positioning to acknowledge the partial, specific knowledge and vision of each subject (even though I recognise this subjectivity itself to be malleable). Therefore, the observations made from inside such a position, from home, have broader significance in constructing a world formed through partial visions.

In relation to feminist standpoint theories, in which a certain standpoint, for instance gender, allows an advantage in knowing certain themes that relate to that gender, I take Moholy’s work from the 1930s to assert that each person posits a standpoint of their own: a home, of which they are the expert. Whatever is right before anyone’s eyes has meaning. This meaning is best accessed through photographing mundane items that create the “small world in his home”. At the end of her text, Moholy proposes that through being sensitive to our immediate surroundings, through photography, we can teach ourselves to also be sensitive to the “shadowy sides of life”.

A home and a kitchen can be thus seen as metaphors for a situated position from which a person looks at the world, takes photographs and trains themselves to observe their immediate surroundings in order to make sense of it as well as relate to it. In an interview, the American artist Zoe Leonard says something quite fundamental in relation to the position of a photographer:

Photography is such an immediate way of showing you my point of view: ‘This is how I saw it, I took this picture, and what I’m showing you is literally my perspective on something.’ For me, these questions – ‘Where do you look from? What’s your process of looking?’ – are inherently political. They are

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162 I make this connection even though it is obvious that standpoint theories developed in much later epochs than Moholy’s time. A discussion on Moholy’s possible liaison with feminist connections of her time can be found in Jordan Troeller, “Lucia Moholy’s Idle Hands,” October, no. 172 (1 May 2020): 68-108, https://doi.org/10.1162/octo_a_00393.

163 “die andere seite könnte sein: dadurch, dass wir auf die kleinen dinge unserer umgebung aufmerksam werden, lernen wir das sehen überhaupt. einer, der gelernt hat, die lichtseiten des lebens, die kleinen, unbeachteten schönenheiten, die heimlichen lebendigkeiten zu sehen, wird der nicht auch einen besseren blick bekommen für die unbeachteten schattenseiten des lebens?...” Lucia Moholy, “der amateur bei sich zuhause.”
feminist questions because they are about power and agency, about where you stand in the world and what you can see from where you stand. I think this is a contemporary concern. Although I understand the relevance of the critique of the male gaze, I’m more interested in my own gaze, in considering the potential of the feminist gaze, the individual gaze, the queer gaze.\textsuperscript{164}

Leonard places emphasis on the gaze, which is a political question, a question about who is looking. The act of looking outwards from an inside is an embodied view and can be understood through the groundwork laid by feminist body art in the 1970s\textsuperscript{165} and how this tradition is reflected in contemporary photography.\textsuperscript{166} In Leonard’s work the body is present as the maker, the seer and the practitioner of photography.

Leonard does not take her own life or her own body as a subject. Her gaze as a subjective perception is nevertheless unveiled from within the serial structures of her photographs. In the following discussion, I will look at Leonard’s serial photographic works, particularly a large series \textit{Analogue}, 1998–2009\textsuperscript{167} in order to explore how such a position and gaze is established through a photographic series, that is formed through repetition of seemingly deadpan, uniform, ‘straight’ images. How do I read Leonard’s gaze exactly, and how does her positioning come through the repetitive structure? Instead of talking this embodied vision simply through a gendered body, a view from the inside is not far from a view from the ‘home’, in so far as a home could be seen as presenting a situation, as well as one’s cultural and social background, where they come from. How do I read the work through alluding to Moholy’s amateur who is at home? How do everyday scenes, amateur style and the shadow sides of life come across in Leonard’s photographic series?

\section*{Home and street}

My admiration for Leonard’s photographic series was invoked by her approach that doesn’t always focus on obvious socially charged subjects or opt for dramatic aesthetics or narrative. In my own photographic work, I had always struggled to achieve technical expertise and certain aesthetics. On the one hand, I aspired to it, then failed to produce crisp, controlled images. There was always grain, imprecision, something that I can only call ‘organic’, so after a while I stopped trying and learned to accept it as a style. Leonard’s photographic expression relies on her


\textsuperscript{165} Fournier, \textit{Autotheory}, 60.


own terms and style. Images are grainy, evenly lit and sometimes murky. There is an approach that follows the tradition of conceptual art but is not rigid. The series focus on something specific, and unlike conceptual predecessors, this something is personal and embodied. Her photographic approach is straightforward and almost plain yet charged with a personal engagement that doesn’t turn to itself, but rather seems to reach out to what is out in the world.

Much of Leonard’s photographic work takes place on the streets of New York, which is a home ground for her.\textsuperscript{168} In addition to her artistic practice, she was an AIDS activist in the 1980s in ACT UP in New York.\textsuperscript{169} Even though in some interviews Leonard has talked about her having needed to work out the political in her work,\textsuperscript{170} her work remains understated and subtle. Viewed as a reflection of her activist background however, the social nature of her photographic works rises in my opinion from a subjectivity that embodies both the activist on the street and the photographer observing the street. While what these two modes of action explicate may be different, they share a locus. Also, in his reading of Leonard’s serial work \textit{Analogue}, Tom McDonough notes her queer activist background and how the mournful atmosphere of the series echoes the mourning in AIDS crisis: \textit{“Analogue mobilises memory and affect to compensate for institutional neglect, now on the urban scale itself”}.\textsuperscript{171}

The street and home have been traditionally treated as separate. The figure of the \textit{flâneur} as a figure of the nineteenth century, and discussed further by Walter Benjamin, was a character of modern life who moved in the public spaces of office, factories, and the street.\textsuperscript{172} As noted by Janet Wolff, the \textit{flâneur} observes the city, but remains himself private: “in his element in the crowd – at the centre of the world and at the same time hidden from the world”.\textsuperscript{173} He can move freely in public, because of the anonymity offered by the crowds, and this position concerned only men.

The separation into public and private was a result of industrialisation, and the division of labour.\textsuperscript{174} This division of the private space and the public space has consequences for political action. The public and private find illustrative counterparts in the concepts of the street and home. As Iris Marion Young discusses, “home” is a debated sphere in feminism, subject to critique as a site of gendered oppression as well as a safe place only available for the privileged.


\textsuperscript{169} Among other activist action.


\textsuperscript{173} Wolff, “The Invisible Flâneuse,” 40.

\textsuperscript{174} Wolff, “The Invisible Flâneuse,” 37.
However, she maintains that home may have a positive meaning. She says, “This concept of home does not oppose the personal and the political, but instead describes conditions that make the political possible. The identity-supporting material of home can be sources of resistance as well as privilege.”

In order to address the privileging structures, she calls for everyone to be included in having a home, rather than excluding “home” from the discussion altogether.

Home is, at least in cities and residential areas, physically adjacent to the street. In an urban environmental setting, a home is the locus of the everyday from which all other everyday experiences start to unfold. The home and the kitchen may provide a stable point from which to start looking at one's surroundings. While home can be a site for housework, it may also be a safe site from which to enter the street.

Robin Kelsey, writing on the work of the American photographer Carrie Mae Weems, focuses on the relationship between the kitchen and the street. Weems’ black and white series *Around the Kitchen Table* presents reconstructed everyday scenes. Kelsey writes, “The street presses into the kitchen, stocking shelves and burdening conversations”.

The relationship between the kitchen and the street becomes a concrete and grasable actualisation of the relationship between the domestic and the political. The street is seeping into the kitchen, but the kitchen as a situated space is also facing the street. Equally, then, the kitchen is a place from which the street is accessed: observed through a window or a balcony, but also stepped into and entered. In her essay “Homeplace (a site for resistance)”, the writer bell hooks addresses home as an important site of resistance in the histories of African American people. The domestic work of black women, maintaining a safe haven against the outside world, should be understood as an act of resistance against oppression: “Whatever the shape and the structure of black liberation struggle (civil rights reform or black power movement), domestic space has been crucial site for organizing, for forming political solidarity.”

The first image of Leonard’s series of black and white photographs *Tree+Fence*, *Out My Back Window*, 1998, is taken from inside her home. The photographs present trees in an urban setting, trees that have grown into, around and entangled

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with metal fences. In an interview in 2003 she talks about this particular first tree in the series and her immediate experience:

I watched that tree for years. When I first moved into that apartment, I was 17. The tree was a sapling coming up behind the fence. Over the 20-odd years I lived there, I watched the tree grow up and around that fence, engulfing part of it, and continuing to grow to its full height.

I was always fascinated, found it so poignant. I came to love that tree.

Finally, one day, I started taking pictures. I began to notice these trees all over the city. I think I was moved by their survival; by their ability to adapt, to find a way to keep growing. For me, these images are anthropomorphic. We all encounter obstacles, we all have a desire to grow outside the limits imposed on us.  

The image that started the series that was shot on one winter in New York. It sets the whole series within a sphere that originates in a view from home, from the inside outwards. As is often the case with photographing serially, once an object comes into view as an approachable subject matter, it starts to appear here and there, available to be photographed again and again.

From deadpan to an embodied, subjective comportment

Leonard’s work *Analogue* comprises of some 400 images. These photographs present from her own neighbourhood in New York shop windows of small-time businesses, sometimes called mom and pop stores, on the brink of a change: gentrification and those shops being replaced by high end and big chain stores. The photographs have been displayed as installations in a white cube setting, as well as published as a book with the same title. The installation was first shown in the Wexner Center for the Arts, Ohio (May 12 – August 12, 2007). The book *Analogue* was published on that occasion.

The frontal, matter-of-fact view coupled with serial repetition aligns Leonard’s work with the minimalist photography probably most known from the German photographers Bernd and Hilla Becher’s work on industrial buildings. The art historian Jordan Troeller describes the viewing experience of *Analogue* as an installation, comparing Leonard’s permutations on a theme to the Bechers’ work. She says, “The photograph serves as a surface on which formal repetitions accrue and the world gradually coalesces into a meaningful picture.”

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180 Zoe Leonard and Beth Dungan, “An Interview.”
182 Jordan Troeller, “Against Abstraction: Zoe Leonard’s ‘Analogue.,” *Art Journal 69*, no. 4 (2010): 108–23. I have to rely on descriptions of the installation and the Museum of Modern Art’s collections website as I have not had a chance to see *Analogue* installed.
183 Troeller, “Against Abstraction,” 111.
installation, with its arrangement into different grids consisting of similar images without any text, promotes, according to Troeller, a cyclical rather than a progressing development from one theme to another. The Bechers’ work creates a typology of their photographed objects such as water towers, cooling towers, et cetera. As single photographs, there is very little they could convey in meaning. These kinds of photographs find their meaning in relation to other images in an assembly.  

Analogue is also organised under different themes: shop fronts, barber shop windows, signs, even American flags.

The book Analogue, published to coincide with the exhibition, is structured differently. In this format, images are not arranged into grids, but the 83 photographs selected for the book each take up one page and follow each other in a sequence. The photographs are accompanied by titles that mark a place and date. While an installation in a gallery invites the viewer to move their gaze as well as their bodies in relation to the photographs, glancing through a photobook provides another kind of experience of movement. The differences between exhibition and book formats are discussed by Chris Balaschak in relation to Berndt and Hilla Becher’s practice. While the exhibition format of grids can be understood as “systematic”, or serial, the book format is sequential and narrational.

The photographs in Analogue can be simultaneously read as repetition and succession. The repetitive structure evokes comparison between differences and similarities of individual shots, while at the same time forming a whole. The successive or sequential reading moves in progression and images are viewed one after another. Movement is then embedded in the series: as linear progression and as a back-and-forth skipping between images.

While both viewing experiences of a photographic series entail the movement of the spectator, the movement of the photographer is equally important. The movement in Analogue manifests itself first as a circular, repetitive motion around Leonard’s neighbourhood and areas near her home in New York, and later on as sequential; a progression, exploration from her hometown to new countries.

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184 Troeller, “Against Abstraction,” 111. (or, “raw materials to marketed product”)
185 For instance, David Campany asks: What would an individual Becher mean? in Campany, “Almost the Same Thing”. Also Blake Stimson observes that: “While an individual Becher photograph seen on its own without attribution could be mistaken easily as the sort of transparent illustration used in trade journals or annual reports – the same photograph seen in its intended setting alongside tens or hundreds of nearly identical others could not support any similar instrumental goal.” In his view, the cumulation of similar forms results in the abstract or anonymous appearance of the objects. Stimson, The Pivot of the World, 149.
186 I am referring here to how these are organised on the Museum of Modern Art’s website. I take it to reflect how they have been installed in an exhibition space. https://www.moma.org/artists/34219#works.
187 He brings up this distinction, referring to Bernd Bechers’ ideas. “Notably, Bernd refers to the exhibition and the book not as two different forms of presentation but two forms of representation. Bernd recognized the differences of these two forms, the book privileging a ‘storytelling’ or sequential aspect, and the exhibition a ‘systematic’ or serial mode.” Balaschak, “Between Sequence and Seriality,” 36.
Movement as both a movement of the spectator and of the photographer is mentioned by the art historian Blake Stimson. In his book *The Pivot of the World* Stimson brings up the importance of movement in relation to serial photography, claiming that in the projects he discusses, it is not so much the constellation of photographs that convey meaning. He writes:

> For each of these enterprises, the movement itself from image to image aimed to be the story more so than did the sum of the collected parts, regardless of whether it is the movement of the photographer himself or herself, or the camera, or the movement of our own eye as it skips from one photograph to the next.

I interpret Leonard’s movement in two ways. Firstly, it has to do with the subjective positioning, secondly with a move between geographical regions. Movement can be viewed as something that expresses a relation to what is being photographed. Through picking up a certain object or a theme, seriality shows a subject scanning a realm from either distance or proximity. The serial method is initially grounding Leonard in a geographical place and a subjective gaze. Then the serial implies a circular movement within the familiar space in the streets of New York, and further movement from those grounds to an unknown sphere. What is the meaning of Leonard’s work manifested in the movement from home to far away, in the unfolding of realities behind an immediate appearance?

**Deadpan, everyday attitude and indexicality**

What both the Bechers’ and Leonard’s projects share on the formal level is the frontal view, which doesn’t vary (at least very much) throughout the execution of the work. This style can be described as ‘deadpan’. Historically, deadpan has its roots in the New Objectivity photography in Germany in the 1920s and 30s. Bernd and Hilla Becher, whose work started in the 1950s and spanned different epochs until Bernd’s death in 2006, were influential in deadpan photography’s emergence. It was particularly through the work of their students at the Düsseldorf academy that a deadpan style came to be so defining of contemporary photography in the 1990s. Deadpan has been described as an aesthetics in photography where the photographer avoids subjective expression and emotional engagement. Precision

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188 Stimson’s exploration is specifically focused on a short post-WWII era in the 1950s, an ideologically pivotal moment in history, but I think his notions on seriality say something about the serial in general as well. Stimson, *The Pivot of the World*.


and crispness, resulting from technical skill, as well as neutral appearance are its features.191

When I look at Leonard’s photographs, I can see certain features that are a result of her use of a Rolleiflex camera. Because this kind of camera is looked in from above and held at waist level, I can tell that, particularly in photographs that show shop windows rectilinearly framed, she has had to tilt the camera a little bit upwards. This results in lines that are not straight, the shop window forming a trapezium rather than a square. There is then a certain embodied imprecision to the images, which puts them into stark contrast with Bernd and Hilla Becher’s carefully considered aesthetics and technical properties. While the Bechers’

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191 Cotton, The Photograph as Contemporary Art, 81. In Cotton’s overview, deadpan emerged in 1990s art photography, and was welcomed by galleries and collectors.
subjects, industrial constructions, might have been situated in the mundane, the couple’s approach to photography was professional, precise and technologically oriented.\textsuperscript{192}

If deadpan involves a certain technical clarity, it hardly fits Leonard’s work. However, there is another reading of deadpan presented by the researcher Aron Vinegar in his writing on the American artist Ed Ruscha’s work. He does not mention technological precision but asks if deadpan is just a useful term for attributes such as: “straightforward, matter-of-fact, banal, ordinary, ironic, and non-artistic,”\textsuperscript{193} or if there is a deeper significance to it. Neutrality is associated with deadpan photography, as well as an unemotional view. Thus, it tends to, in the words of Vinegar, “emphasize what might be called an ‘evidentiary’ condition”,\textsuperscript{194} Leonard’s photographs are deadpan in many of these ways. They are straightforward, and in their directness to an extent banal. They document literally what is there, with a matter-of-fact expression. This is afforded by the camera’s ability to record what one sees.

Not only a style or aesthetic, deadpan can also be approached as an \textit{attunement}.\textsuperscript{195} Vinegar suggests this shift as he brings up the concept of attunement or mood from philosopher Martin Heidegger’s thinking. Vinegar explains its meaning:

\begin{quote}
In sum, moods are world disclosing. They make a world possible as a particular configuration of sense. In moods, we are exposed, vulnerable, and open to the world; we are affected, touched, and struck by things. It is only through mood that the world and the things in it can matter to us at all. Mood is not a mode of ‘knowing’ the world, but the precondition for ways of encountering it.\textsuperscript{196}
\end{quote}

Mood or attunement is therefore a precondition for being, sensing in the world and relating to it.\textsuperscript{197}

I understand mood or attunement here as a certain orientation towards taking photographs. This take on the deadpan also makes sense in relation to Leonard’s practice, which can be understood as being directed by a personal attunement. A similar conduct is also associated with Bechers’ photographs. In describing Bernd and Hilla Becher’s attitude to their photographic subjects between “cool objectivity” and “hot subjectivity,”\textsuperscript{198} Blake Stimson approaches Bechers’ attitude as a particular \textit{comportment}. The word comportment by a lexicon definition means

\textsuperscript{192} Balaschak, “Between Sequence and Seriality”.
\textsuperscript{194} Vinegar, “Ed Ruscha, Heidegger, and Deadpan Photography,” 30.
\textsuperscript{195} Vinegar, “Ed Ruscha,” 30.
\textsuperscript{196} Vinegar, “Ed Ruscha,” 39.
\textsuperscript{197} Vinegar’s discussion and interpretation is more complicated than what I present here. He explains attunement and the deadpan through another Heideggerian concept, that of “facticity”. He says: “This is all to say that facticity begins to open a world at that point where photography responds to, and brushes against, those ‘facts,’” and continues: “For Heidegger, facticity is enabled by our fundamental attunements or moods. It is the ‘how’ according to which one is in such and such a way.” Vinegar, “Ed Ruscha,” 38–39.
\textsuperscript{198} Stimson, \textit{The Pivot of the World}, 140.
“behaviour of a person,” and this behaviour doesn't only refer to something that can be thought of as a mental orientation; it also entails in its meaning the bodily composure. Whatever the semantic or ontological differences may be, I use here the words attitude, attunement, and comportment interchangeably. They all describe a phenomenon of how a person relates to something, and how that embodied posture is in its way forming the way one approaches a subject/object in the world.

My point here is that serial expression requires some kind of positioning, a pre-existing comportment or attitude. Blake Stimson offers a reading of the serial photography of Bernd and Hilla Becher through approaching the method the Bechers developed, which became influential for their students and other contemporary artists alike. This “grammar”, he describes, was put forward as an “embodied expression, as a form of comportment or bearing toward the world, and as a sign or a symptom of a social relation, that is, as a sign or condition or component part of a social form”.

A style of photography, focused on an appearance of objects, can be accessed through vernacular photography and its points of interest. The photographs of Analogue present a somewhat literal view of what is in front of Leonard's camera. We are invited to view what is or was there, what the photographer was looking at and has decided to show. The literal understanding of what a photograph (re) presents is also a mundane one. This literal is exemplified in the way instrumental photography aims to make accurate reproductions of objects. The literal showing of an object results in Bechers' work in an archive of 'anonymous' sculptures. Leonard's and Bechers' photographs share similarities: the straight view, repetition, flat lighting and lack of people. Where they depart is that Bechers' photographs have technical precision that provides a lot of detail but little information about its subjects. Their photographs resemble those “used in trade journals or annual reports”. Leonard's aesthetics provides a different take on the vernacular: the amateur.

Photographs presenting directly what is there serve the utilitarian purposes of vernacular imagery. Whether these vernacular photographs be family portraits or product photographs, they have a use value that relies on them accurately depicting what is being looked at. Leonard's photographs in Analogue can be described in those terms in so far as they seem to point directly at what is being

201 Stimson claims that the project, “does not provide greater knowledge of the processes or history of their subject” Stimson, The Pivot of the World, 149. On the other hand, for Chris Balaschak, in Bechers’ photography the sequential dimension refers to the progression in industrial history. See Balaschak, “Between Sequence and Seriality”.
202 Stimson, The Pivot of the World, 149.
looked at. Instead of constructing images with lights or searching for a pictorial appearance from shadows and light, or focusing on action, the images are shot in available light in early mornings, which gives an even hue and allows the object in front of the camera to take the central role in the image.

If considered from an angle that these were indeed Leonard’s everyday, familiar scenes, approached with a method that doesn’t rely on meticulous planning, and realised with a handheld camera and no additional equipment, the practice itself could be described as being mundane and Leonard as adopting an ‘everyday attitude’. The amateur, or quotidian, photographer is also present on many levels in Leonard’s other work. For example, the installation *How to Make Good Pictures* (2016) presents 429 books bearing the same title, laid out on a gallery floor, organized in piles of uneven height according to the editions of this printed book. These objects are not only books but point to the mass practice of amateur photography, and in the same way as, for instance, the artist Christian Boltanski’s installations used clothes to build an index to bodies that are not present, these photography manuals are traces of the crowd of people who have taken up a camera and used it to look at the world.

Leonard’s style is not one of industrial, technically precise instrumental photography but a different exposition of the vernacular, one connoting more the amateur. Vernacular photographic practices have been explored for instance through a series of exhibitions by the Walther Collection. Of these displays, worth mentioning here is an exhibition in 2019 titled *Destruction and Transformation: Vernacular Photography and Built Environment*. The exhibition comprises photographs of instrumental use or by amateurs, with the exception of Ed Ruscha and William Christenberry, who made artworks. They nevertheless fit in, as their works also are documents of mundane, everyday spaces, despite their context.

It is fascinating, but perhaps not surprising, how vernacular photographic practice that serves the task of documenting spaces on the verge of their destruction share similar aesthetics to the photographs in *Analogue*. In the exhibition, and discussed in its catalogue, are several sequences of storefronts in New York that were photographed at the beginning of the twentieth century, as well as the 1930s

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for different purposes such as, quoting curator Brian Wallis, “municipal tax files, insurance appraisals, real estate records, preservationist campaigns, and historical archives”\textsuperscript{210} In his essay, Wallis notes how, on the brink of the modernisation of urban spaces “these pictures form a counter-narrative to the presupposed stability of aesthetic and structural planning within modernist city spaces and architecture”\textsuperscript{211} In a similar manner, \textit{Analogue} provides a counter-catalogue to an aesthetics that could be seen in commercial imagery and glossy progress plans for city refurbishment. Architectural visualisations, photorealist visual renderings for city planning, form a genre that presents flawless visions of a potential future. In contrast, Leonard’s photography presents a glance at what is to become the past. Most importantly, it pays attention to a visuality that often goes unnoticed.

The literal presentation is familiar in the amateur and instrumental practices mentioned above. A simple showing of things calls for an understanding of the photograph as a sign that has the features of an icon and an index. The two concepts were introduced in the late nineteenth century by the philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce in his writing on signs. The likeness of a photograph to what it depicts can be considered its iconic value. According to Peirce, this is particularly the case with instantaneous photographs\textsuperscript{212} and this still feels pertinent to documentary efforts, particularly like Leonard’s literal views. However, since likeness is there because of a causal relationship to something that was in front of the camera, photographs are also indices\textsuperscript{213} Photographs may have a likeness to what they depict, but they are also in an indexical relationship with the depicted object\textsuperscript{214}

Indexicality is a widely interpreted and debated concept in the field of photography theory\textsuperscript{215} Margaret Iversen proposes in her text “Following Pieces” another understanding of indexicality, that of “performative photography”, which “tracks and records a contemporary event”\textsuperscript{216} This understanding of the index shifts the focus from an object in front of the camera to the photographic act\textsuperscript{217} The kind of performative artworks Iversen discusses are conceptual work by the

\textsuperscript{211} Wallis, “Destruction and Transformation,” 365.
\textsuperscript{212} ‘Instantaneous’ views may refer here to how in the late nineteenth century it became technologically possible to arrest motion and thus fleeting moments of life, as opposed to staged photography such as studio portraits. The earliest instantaneous views were stereographs of street scenes in the end of 1850s. See for example Naomi. Rosenblum, \textit{A World History of Photography}, 4th ed. (New York: Abbeville Press, 2007). 67-8, and 259.
\textsuperscript{214} According to Peirce, likeness itself does not contain any information, but has to be put in relation to something. It is only the symbolic dimension that brings meaning to a sign.
\textsuperscript{217} David Green and Joanna Lowry, “From Presence to the Performative: Rethinking Photographic Indexicality,” in \textit{Where Is the Photograph?}, ed. Green, David (Photoforum / Photoworks, 2003). Their ideas will be discussed further in Chapter Four.
artists Sophie Calle, or Vito Acconci, who don’t place the same emphasis on what Roland Barthes called a “that has been,” a now absent object caught with the camera.

The use of an analogue camera and the bland, almost murky aesthetics that results from an even light and the use of film material do bring a sense of loss to Leonard’s images. The idea of “loss” is one that has been frequently interpreted in Analogue; both the gradually obsolete small-time businesses as well as analogue photography itself. The photographic project has been accessed through the concept of the analogue in many writings since its subject matter and technical execution revolve around it. The images are all shot with a vintage camera on medium format film. Analogue, as its title suggests uses analogue technology on the brink of it becoming obsolete.

There is certainly a sense of loss in Leonard’s photographs of the disappearing small businesses. This is the direct, pointing nature of photography, where the indexicality of a photograph is manifested in how it is a trace of objects and events that were once in front of the camera, and which is so important to the documentary value of photography. But photographs also carry in themselves the act of taking the photograph, and I think this act is prompted by a (universal) wish to show. In the 1970s, Susan Sontag described this showing as something that both professionals and non-professionals shared:

> Virtuosi of the noble image like Alfred Stieglitz and Paul Strand, composing mighty, unforgettable photographs decade after decade, still want, first of all to show something ‘out there’, just like the Polaroid owner for whom photographs are handy, fast form of notetaking, or the shutterbug with a Brownie who takes snapshots as souvenirs of daily life.220

Showing can be then understood as a gesture that binds the photographer to what they depict, just as each photograph that is taken indicates that someone took it, the initiation to take it is also embedded there.221 Photography “tracks and records” not only what is happening in front of the camera, but at the same time its own operative power to do that. In other words: any photograph is not only representing an object but also recording the act of taking a photograph.222

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218 For a discussion and outline of this understanding of the work, see Troeller, “Against Abstraction”.
221 I might note here that the concept analogue is inseparable from the indexical nature of photography. Like Iversen says, the iconic and the indexical can be uncoupled. She refers briefly to digitally manipulated photography that “plays up iconicity at the expense of indexicality,” and how on the other hand, for example, Man Ray’s Rayograms (direct exposures on light-sensitive paper) rely on indexicality rather than iconicity. I think this is a point that is good to take up since much of the digital photography that is shared on social media platforms presents itself as iconic in the way that it is meant to tell what has been seen. However, this telling of what has been seen entails the indexical, pointing factor of photography as well. Iversen, “Following Pieces,” 93.
222 See also Green and Lowry, “From Presence to the Performative”. Their article will be brought up again in a later chapter.
In the conceptual works Iversen discusses, artists use the camera “like an instrument of discovery, such as a telescope”\(^ {223} \) and do not place emphasis on individual images. Even though Leonard’s work departs from this kind of conceptual work of photography, particularly from those only “recording its own condition,”\(^ {224} \) performativity is important in understanding photography as an act. Entailing both, the trace of what has been, and the act of the image making itself, Analogue displays at the same time an environment as well as the photographic documentation process that takes place in relation to it.

A stylistic feature in Leonard’s photographs, one affecting their reading, is the fact that she never crops her images afterwards. The process, the presence of the camera device and film as the recording medium, become visible in the way Leonard’s finished photographic prints display the rim of the film on each image. The documentary photographer of 'the decisive moment' Henri Cartier-Bresson was known for not cropping his photographs. The way he saw it, “tricks” in the darkroom would not make a “mediocre” image any better.\(^ {225} \) While Cartier-Bresson’s use of a visible film frame in his finished photographs was in certain photodocumentary circles seen as a sign of skill, a mastering of the medium, in Leonard’s work the outline points to the presence of the camera, and a rather different kind of subjectivity that operates the device,\(^ {226} \) one that in my view suggests a position that is more homely than worldly.

Another instance of how an embodied subjectivity comes across in Analogue is the way Leonard’s body composure can be observed in some photographs that display a reflection on a store window. Even though reflections occur only in a few images, and were probably not intended,\(^ {227} \) they nevertheless place the photographer herself in the images. These are occasions when the viewer sees the photographer – a feature that is likely to underline Leonard’s own position. For example, in TV Sets in Store Window, 2001 (fig. 4), Leonard’s figure holding a camera is reflected in a window.\(^ {228} \) This particular photograph is selected as the first in the book and thus sets the tone for what follows.

The occasional reflections in the series could also be read as another signal of Leonard’s ‘everyday attitude’. When the photographer is concentrating on

\(^{223}\) Iversen, “Following Pieces,” 93.

\(^{224}\) I am thinking here of Camera Recording its Own Condition (7 Apertures, 10 Speeds, 2 Mirrors), 1971 by the conceptual artist John Hilliard. This is an example of conceptual artwork that explores photography’s non-pictorial dimension by placing attention on the means of production of images, photographic process itself in the analytical tradition discussed in Chapter One. The work is a grid of images showing a camera taking pictures of itself through a mirror with different exposures. On display on Tate website, accessed July 1, 2021, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hilliard-camera-recording-its-own-condition-7-apertures-10-speeds-2-mirrors-t03116.


\(^{226}\) “I want to show that there is a frame; that every photograph is an edited, subjective image.” in Zoe Leonard and Beth Dungan “An Interview with Zoe Leonard,” Discourse, 24.2, Spring 2002, 70-85.


depicting what is in front of the camera, failing to see what else might be caught on camera, it results in a difficulty of reading meaning in a photograph’s different elements.\textsuperscript{229} However, these kind of slippages in the composition of photographs are not typical in \textit{Analogue}, and it is ambiguous as to whether they are accidents at all, or part of conscious aesthetic decisions that serve to both underline her as the author of the series and emphasise the amateur style.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure4.jpg}
\caption{Zoe Leonard, \textit{TV Sets in Store Window}, 2001, from the portfolio \textit{Analogue}. Dye transfer print, 20 × 16 in. (50.8 × 40.6 cm). Collection of the New York Public Library.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{229} In her discussion on vernacular influences and Lithuanian photography, Agnė Narušytė points out that amateur photographs entail accidental features. Agnė Narušytė, \textit{The Aesthetics of Boredom: Lithuanian Photography, 1980 - 1990} (Vilnius: Vilniaus Dailės Akad. Leidykla, 2010), 270.
Walking the streets

Walking the streets with a camera and repeatedly spotting a similar subject matter is the artistic method in *Analogue*. To do something again and again is a form of exercise in both senses of the word; to repeat something is to learn by doing, rehearsing. To take a camera and to do something repeatedly also alludes to physical exercise, muscular movement, doing the reps, training. The physical nature of a performative serial photographic work could be illustrated with the conceptual artist John Baldessari’s *Throwing Three Balls in the Air to Get a Straight Line (Best of Thirty-Six Attempts)* (1973). The artwork is a game where the artist threw three orange balls into the air and the attempts were photographed. The best efforts, ones forming a line, were selected for prints. The work seems to illustrate a way for an artwork where photographs exist as proofs of what has been accomplished, indicating action behind their making. *Throwing Three Balls in the Air* is a game and physical exercise. It is an exercise in repetition but also in the sense of rehearsing. If an action is repeated enough times, will it be possible to throw three balls into the air to form a straight line?

Like many conceptual artworks of the time, *Throwing Three Balls* relies on a pre-given task the artist gave himself. The serial structuring of *Analogue* can be accessed through this other level of ‘performative photography’. Iversen develops an understanding of performative photography as artworks that are following a pre-given rule as a guide for conducting photographs. She discusses this further in a later article in relation to Ed Ruscha’s conceptual art in the 1960s. Ruscha, whose artistic work was mostly made up of painting, illustration and sculpture, made small photographic books at the end of the 1960s that contained black and white amateur style photographs of mundane views in his home, California. The books’ titles such as *26 Gasoline Stations*, *Every Building on Sunset Strip*, and *Some Los Angeles Apartments* address literally what he photographed. What is notable for Iversen’s analysis is that, for example, Ruscha came up with the name *26 Gasoline Stations* beforehand (before photographing it) and since the title came first, the title could be seen as an instruction for the work: “record 26 gasoline stations along Route 66”. An instruction to initiate making a series is an inherent part of the artwork. In Iversen’s definition, “Performative photography begins

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232 Iversen, “Following Pieces”.


with an instruction or rule which is followed through with a performance”.

Iversen draws from the linguist J. L. Austin’s concept of speech acts; performative utterances that, instead of describing an action, perform an action themselves by simply uttering a word or a sentence. In addition, what is significant to her formulation of the performative is that, in line with Austin’s speech theory, the rule or instruction is not only descriptive of what follows, it also “makes it happen”, letting chance and accident come into play in the evolvement of the work.

The performative, in the sense of giving a rule, is reminiscent of Mel Bochner’s ideas on serial art discussed previously. The use of a pre-given rule bears resemblance to his description of the serial being ordered by a “systematically predetermined process”. It is difficult to imagine a performative work in this sense that was not serial – after all, an instruction to do something entails doing something repeatedly; the processual often includes attempts, sketches, try-outs, repetitions.

Giving a rule sets in motion, and implies a repeated set of acts. Iversen also explicates that performative structuring is inherently serial:

> The term ‘performative’ is often used in critical writing in a less precise way to mean work with an element of performance, but I would like to see it reserved for the work of those artists who are interested in displacing spontaneity, self-expression and immediacy by putting into play repetition and the inherently iterative character of the instruction.

The concept of the performative, in the sense of giving an instruction to an open-ended process, offers then a way to describe the system of any photographic series. If we expand the notion of the rule or instruction to mean an intention and utterance of “I will make a series of …”, we get to the core of the workings of most of photographic series. It is artistic intention articulated and manifested. Conceptual artists focused more on processes than pictures. These processes, like performance pieces, were sometimes set off by so-called ‘event scores’, written instructions on how to do an artwork. The ‘scores’ sometimes work only as texts, as guidelines for making art, and they can be potentially realised on multiple occasions.

The ‘score’ can be described as a brief that the artist sets themselves. For example, reportage photographers in a working environment would follow a brief that was given to them by the newspaper. The conceptualists, as the artist and art historian Jeff Wall discusses, Douglas Huebler, Ed Ruscha and Dan Graham,

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236 Austin’s influence on conceptual art and photography is also discussed by David Green and Joanna Lowry in Green and Lowry, “From Presence to the Performative”.
238 Bochner, “Serial Attitude”.
240 The ways artworks in conceptual art were often “specific realizations of a general proposition” are explored by Liz Kotz in an article “The Language between Photography and Performance”, October 111 (2005): 3-21. See also Iversen, “Auto-Maticity,” 15.
created a parody of photojournalism with reportages that would examine whatever the artist seemed fit, providing a model for artwork, rather than exploring a topic. Wall says, “The gesture of reportage is withdrawn from the social field and attached to a putative theatrical event.” These works were arranged through a task the artist gave himself, which illustrates that a ‘score’ can be seen as a self-assigned brief organising a serial work, imitating and parodying the tasks of the working environment of photojournalists.

This was new in the realm of art, but it makes me wonder if such a mode, a performative rule, is an organising principle of any photographic series, and if that was merely articulated and spelled out as an act by conceptual artists at a time when fine art photography relied on singular pictures hung on gallery walls? Most photographic series could be articulated through a performative inscription: they could be said to have started with or be governed by an intention to photograph this or that. The principle of a photographic series is a sentence, it is readable. It is not written on the photographic series, but I claim that we can extract this sentence from any photographic series. It is because of the inscriptive nature of a series that we manage to make sense of it. Even when a performative rule is not being followed, the mere nature of serial photography as a set of photographic gestures would always translate into a performative inscription. Bernd and Hilla Becher were “going around Germany photographing industrial buildings with a large-format camera,” and this would be an apt way to sum up their practice.

Made some forty years after the explorations of conceptual artists, Leonard’s work follows the performative tradition of serial photography in that it follows a reasonably rigid modality of photographing that can be expressed as a sentence: photographing store fronts in a straightforward way with a Rolleiflex camera. Her work also departs from this tradition as it is based on and aims to document an existing phenomenon, which would allude to an actual documentary, rather than the parody of documentary mentioned above. As discussed in the previous chapter, conceptual methods were already being combined with documentary aims in the 1970s. One feature that underlines the significance of performative photography in documenting is that the score, or the ‘brief’ an artist sets themselves opens some unexpected results and consequences. To start photographing a series is an initiation of exploration and investigation.

Shadow sides of life

Despite an aesthetics that resembles a vernacular style, Leonard’s work is hardly unprofessional or unsophisticated. What the vernacular aesthetics rather underline in Leonard’s work is a straightforward engagement with her surroundings; a homely, quotidian attitude. Analogue started, like many of her other photographic

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241 Wall, Jeff, “Marks of Indifference,” 36.
series, from near where Leonard lives, in her immediate environment. She describes the starting phases of the work in an interview:

I began this project in an attempt to understand by observing and recording the very humble everyday surroundings of my everyday life. How am I connected to people who make my clothes, to people who buy and sell my clothes and my food? Who benefits from the connection? Who suffers from the connection? 243

As she was walking in a neighbourhood in Brooklyn in an industrial area, she saw piles of textiles packed tightly in bundles. She would trace them three years later to developing countries. 244 These photographs show large bundles of used clothing, covered in textile wraps and tied with string.

We know these are used clothes from the accompanying text, otherwise the objects are opaque. These lumps, if you will, could be viewed as objects that, while standing on a street in New York, indexically point to their destination, making a connection between the everyday of this street and the everyday of the place they are taken to. The opacity of the bundles 245 is analogous to the way the processes they point to are oftenopaque and not revealed. Used clothing, rags, also downright trash, are being exported to other countries, often in the Global South, but this process does not open itself in the everyday experiences of the products’ first consumers. I think of Leonard’s serial photography, the inquiry into the contents and fate of those objects, as an opening act. One by one her images peel off layers that make certain phenomena invisible: opening the parcels and spreading their insides for display.

Starting from home, sensitive to the “shadow sides of life,” Leonard’s gaze wanders through the streets of New York, and eventually to Haiti, Uganda and Poland. The unexpectedness of serial exploration becomes illustrated in the way Analogue moves from the streets of New York to places like Kampala in Uganda, or how it marks, as formulated by writer Charity Scribner, “a journey out of New York’s urban memory and into contemporary thought on the transnational”. 246

As the series progresses, the work evokes a temporal shift; from the nostalgia of the almost-past: Leonard’s personal mourning of a neighbourhood (home)

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244 Tom McDonough describes this: “Walking through a district of warehouses, small-scale industry and wholesalers found just north of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, she found large bales of used clothing stacked up on the sidewalk, of which she made a number of colour and black-and-white images.” McDonough, “The Archivist of Urban Waste,” 25.

245 The wholesale buyers do not know what they contain until they have acquired them. This adds another layer to the opaqueness of these items. See Charity Scribner, “Reading the Lumpenproletariat: Zoe Leonard’s Kampala Photographs,” Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art 33 (2013), muse.jhu.edu/article/539540.

246 Scribner, “Reading the Lumpenproletariat,” 50.
confronting transformation, to contemporary, present and ongoing global currents of commerce.

What the serial method unravels is the change in the infrastructure between the places that appear in photographs. In African markets there are no square shop windows that would conform to a square format, and sometimes not even large numbers of products that would create a visual pattern. The photographic activity is not framed by the street anymore, the street that was with its regimented rows of buildings and windows a familiar structure for Leonard. The rigid form of frontal rectilinear framing becomes increasingly difficult to maintain. If there was any resemblance to deadpan aesthetics in the New York photographs of the series, then, as the project progresses, more haphazard and amateur-like impressions start to come forward. This shift is very slight, and it makes me wonder whether it is a result of the subject matter, or also a shift in comportment of the photographer who moves from familiar surroundings to unknown terrains, from a confident repetition to slightly unconnected snapping. Is a familiar subject more easily turned into a uniform series? If so, a serial, rigid expression relies on something already known, often observed and encountered.

Seriality emerges in Leonard’s work through an embodied, repetitive gesture of the photographing subject. Many of the corner stores Leonard photographed sold products that were imported by their owners from the countries they had immigrated from. Immigrant-owned businesses are prolific, particularly in large cities in Europe and the US. Even though oriental grocery shops and afro markets have a firm place in urban environments in Western countries, they form an alternative to large wholesalers and big chain stores, a parallel commerce that exists on the margins.

Leonard’s photographs are showing and pointing to a world that exists embedded, but somewhat hidden or unseen, in her everyday surroundings. This serves as a reminder of the parallel worlds that continue to exist under the façade of the ordinary. It is another matter if such worlds are truly understood and made known through this method. On the other hand, can the world ever really be known and conveyed through photographing it? Questions that circulate around what is known and who knows remain.

247 For a discussion of Leonard’s work and obsolescence see Troeller, “Against Abstraction.”
248 I think that much of the crisp aesthetics of Bechers’ photography was connected to their subject matter that was in itself already ‘straight’, industrial and monumental.
Who knows this world? Who takes care of it? who lives consciously in his surroundings? 252

Leonard's repetitive act of photography that takes place in the everyday frames the photographic act itself as mundane and ordinary. We can think of the orientation to serial, everyday photography as being both a mental and a bodily composure. The mental-physical comportment is what defines photographic activity from its onset. This comportment or attitude can be read in repetition. Leonard's serial practice that takes place in the quotidian and represents itself through what I call an everyday attitude also entails progression. An everyday attitude to the world is then a situated, bodily comportment, where the one who photographs is 'speaking from home' and extending their view to the outside world through repeating an observation. In this way, serial photography becomes a way of expressing a relationship with one's surroundings.

252 Lucia Moholy, "the amateur at home".
3. **AN EVERYDAY ATTITUDE**

Dina Kelberman’s *I’m Google* and photography as an everyday act

To us, the difference between the photographer as an individual eye and the photographer as an objective recorder seems fundamental, the difference often regarded, mistakenly, as separating photography as art from photography as document. But both are logical extensions of what photography means: note-taking on, potentially, everything in the world, from every possible angle.

Susan Sontag

*Almost the same thing*

I discussed in the previous chapter how Zoe Leonard’s *Analogue* can be interpreted as originating from a position of a home and expressing an everyday comportment. An everyday attitude is also legible in Baltimore artist Dina Kelberman’s practice that takes place online. Kelberman’s *I’m Google* is a Tumblr blog that represents results she has had by googling. Kelberman herself does not speak about a home, but I do think that the physical space one inhabits when googling is, if not always a home, at least a private place where one is free to browse the Internet. She describes searching the Internet as “common”, and the work to be a “visual representation” of this activity. Kelberman looks for the mundane, rather than spectacular, and this, more likely, points to an experience in a domestic setting as opposed to extreme or faraway circumstances. The project is enlightening of how searching for images online is related to aspects of seriality and serial acts.

*I’m Google* (2011–) is published as a Tumblr blog and is an online work that presents a feed of everyday photographs from Google Image Search. It is an ongoing work, which Kelberman updates every now and then. The photographs fill the screen in the form of a grid. They are pictures of mundane objects and are structured visually so that each image that follows the previous one bears a visual semblance to the one that follows. This increasing mass of images forms a sequence that is a display of a slow transformation from one object to another in accordance with their appearance. Bluish solar panels morph into audience

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seats and then through a sequence of gymnastics halls into plastic curtains in an
industrial setting, and so on.

*I'm Google* is a catalogue of instrumental images. The photographs all have use
value as visual artefacts that simply serve to show something. They are denotative
and aim to show what something looks like rather than to communicate anything
complex or to evoke a feeling. Photographs that serve practical functions include
scientific photographs, industrial photographs, product photographs as well
as everyday photographs that are taken for a utilitarian purpose. Net tutorials
supported by photographs, lost and found adverts on social media and many
product photographs fall under this category, as do private notes one might take
for a shopping list.

This is the sphere of photographs Kelberman takes up in her work. The
photographs she has gathered from different online sites using Google Image
Search expose a universe of technical images as well as just mundane shots of egg
yolks, tents, office equipment, paste, ropes, oil stain on cardboard, et cetera. There
are also images of phenomena such as hurricanes and fires (although as part of
the sequence even natural catastrophes seem to become part of the ordinary).
While most of the photographs display simple objects, many point to doings,
manoeuvres or fidgeting. These acts entail, to name only a few, cutting a balloon,
tracing hands by drawing, kneading dough, building sandcastles, welding.

Many of the images seem curious, some even ominous, such as a sequence of
plastered arms. However, when the viewer clicks on an image on her Tumblr feed
they are forwarded to the Google Search by Image page, and can go all the way
to the source page of each photograph.255 Her work opens a sphere of vernacular
images which build up an image world that feels abyssal as one explores the work
more deeply.

The grid as opaque, the grid as transparent

The overall surface aesthetics of *I'm Google* presents a view that is pretty much
the one we see these days the most: the grid. An image search grid is ubiquitous,
mundane, thoroughly embedded in the quotidian experience of photography, a
manifestation and a visual articulation of the fact that photographs do not exist
alone but form a multitude, a mass that is increasing daily as more and more
images are uploaded online. The grid, on some occasions, may be the only way
to experience a multitude of photographs. The grid is essentially a form, and it can
also be accessed through the lens of necessity as a preferred display format for an
abundance of images. Since it is a way to assemble many images in one place, or
within one view, its meaning is often instrumental and practical. One of its uses
is to display an archive, which has encyclopaedic value. However, the grid is also

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255 I wrote this chapter in autumn 2021, when Google had a Search by Image page. It has since
changed into Google Lens and the interface of the search has changed drastically, as have some of
the functions. This text is based on the older version of the interface. See figures 5 and 6.
Figure 5  Dina Kelberman, *I’m Google*, 2011–, online work. Screenshots taken by the author on November 22, 2021.
familiar in contemporary (photographic) art. David Campany suggests that the grid form was used by artists such as Andy Warhol, Joachim Schmid and Susan Hiller, and is related to those practices that deal with archival material.\textsuperscript{256} The grid has a historical rooting in modern art, and has been discussed most famously by Rosalind Krauss, who in her article “Grids” describes the grid as “antinatural, antimimetic, antireal”\textsuperscript{257} Krauss calls the grid, an “emblem of modernity,” one that only appeared in art in the twentieth century. According to Krauss, the grid was missing from nineteenth century art. She continues that the grid form was, however, used in the nineteenth century to explain the optics of the eye, and because of this it was also accessed by painters. In symbolism, the grid was explicated as a window. Krauss writes, “For the window is experienced both transparent and opaque”\textsuperscript{258} Window glass transmits light, but also reflects it back. Krauss writes:

\begin{quote}
And so the window is experienced by the symbolist as a mirror as well – something that freezes and locks the self into the space of its own reduplicated being. Flowing and freezing; glace in French means glass, mirror, and ice; transparency, opacity, and water.\textsuperscript{259}
\end{quote}

If we also follow a symbolist logic in relation to Kelberman’s grid, it is voicing both the flowing as well as the frozen nature of the grid. The reflecting nature of Kelberman’s grid is not optic but it is rather expressed in the act of the viewer who, like the artist who looked at Google search grids in order to realise the work, is performing a similar action. Kelberman’s grid is transparent, transmitting gestures: the viewer can click on and locate the clicked image. It is also opaque as the viewer is drawn into a similar action performed by Kelberman herself. By this I mean that the ‘real’ Google grid becomes a reflection of the original blog page that also displays a grid. Clicking images does not make anything happen but invokes a repetitive set of acts. What is the agency of the ‘Googler’ who reveals through each iteration yet another opaque grid?

The grid invites a comparison between individual photographs, and \textit{I'm Google} makes use of this feature through building a visual, but not necessarily informational, comparison between them. The photographer and writer Teju Cole, in his essay “Google's Macchia”, describes a Search by Image with a metaphor of ‘macchia’, a visual semblance that is legible through shadows, light and colour.\textsuperscript{260} Through these kinds of visual similarities an image search finds images to be

\textsuperscript{258} Krauss, “Grids,” 58.
\textsuperscript{259} Krauss, “Grids,” 59.
\textsuperscript{260} ‘Macchia’ is a term Cole brings up from an old art theoretical text by Vittorio Imbriani, published in 1868. In Cole’s words: “It [macchia] is, in other words, the total compositional and coloristic effect of an image in the split second before the eye begins to parse it for meaning”. Teju Cole, \textit{Known and Strange Things: Essays} (New York: Random House, 2016), 186.
similar to each other, despite what the images might mean. In Kelberman’s grid, colour and form link photographs together in a sequence. What appears as order in the visually coherent grid becomes convoluted when one accesses the actual Google search page to which the viewer is directed from the blog. The work has therefore an aesthetic appearance, but the meaning of the work is in how this appearance operates on a larger scale, and points to the network of acts and practices that make up everyday photography.

Even though it appears that the selection of photographs in Kelberman’s grid is produced by an algorithm – and partly it is, as the work relies on the structure of Tumblr as well as Google – it is in fact not created by a bot but constructed manually, through hours of work searching, selecting and editing images. This highlights the fact that even though mundane images appear as a mass, this plenitude is still constructed of single, individual images. And while their arrangement is a grid of images bearing semblances, each photograph is unique. Like Leonard in her photographic series, Kelberman is not only taking the everyday of images as her subjects, but her act belongs to the sphere of the everyday. There is then a difference between photographs of the everyday and photography that depicts itself as mundane and is also part of an everyday activity.

While the photographs in this ‘collection’ point to human activity, the blog goes beyond illustrating activities, igniting actual acts through its way of operation. Upon clicking an image, the viewer is taken to the Google search site which provides the necessary background for the photograph. Each image is not an image as such, but also a link to its Google Image Search site. This is the way a Tumblr blog works; one can embed images by uploading them but also through linking them to where they are borrowed from. Tapping into the logics of blog sites and sharing, where what we see appearing as images is in fact often rooted somewhere else, the work presents some conditions of the networked image and reveals the everyday actions that structure our relationship to those images.

The networked image

In his essay “Atlas of Affect” on Kelberman’s work, Teju Cole brings up atlases of images by Aby Warburg and Gerhard Richter as precedents, but also discusses the differences of these projects. Kelberman’s atlas, as do the mentioned projects, points to an idea of an image world, a larger ecology of images. In Cole’s words, Kelberman’s project “is indebted to this high-art lineage, another strand [in the work] is about something else entirely: the kind of ‘atlasing’ only Google could make possible.” The kind of atlas that Google and Tumblr enable is one where photographs are in flux, linked to each other via appearances, but also by metadata, tags, comments, shares and reshares. They seem to illustrate what

262 Cole, Known and Strange Things, 192.
Daniel Rubinstein and Katarina Sluis have described as an undecidability of images, where the metadata of photographs is malleable, can be altered, and overall means that the meaning of network images is often not stable.\(^{263}\)

On the other hand, as an archive, *I’m Google* is straightforward. It enables the viewer to go back to the original image and the context it was published in. Kelberman uses a serial way of presenting to arrange the massive quantity of online images, meaning that she is creating another order out of this data. Another control that is imposed on these images is that they are placed and traced to their origins instead of leaving them to float around. Kelberman’s algorithm simultaneously draws from the phenomenon of circulation, but at the same time grounds the images so that they are traceable to their origins. Thus, following an image of a wired coat hanger, one is taken to the search page for similar images and pages, but then also to a website where it was published originally, here a site for so-called ‘life hacks’. Her work, then, more than illustrates the malleable nature of images online. It points to the vast need and use of images under these contexts.

One can marvel at her curious findings but is also drawn into the same action. Each clicking of an image takes one to a Google search page and reveals a grid of similar images that the viewer can explore further and further, caught in the act of browsing images on the Internet. In this way, the work is not only a representation of a quotidian practice but an instigator of such acts in the viewer. And while it is a grid, a catalogue and to an extent an archive, it nevertheless points to, is an illustration of and creates serial action: that of clicking, again and again. Kelberman’s grid is not only an appearance (and of course it is debatable if any grid-like artform is merely an appearance). Its focus of inquiry is not images, but the everyday activity of liaising with them.

The anthropologist and writer on photography Elizabeth Edwards notes that an interest in industrial, or other instrumental, images has taken place mostly in the context of art, in her words, “not because of their intrinsic historical interest, but because they appeal to contemporary aesthetic sensibilities”.\(^{264}\) Instrumental images on their own, as they are, are rarely displayed.\(^{265}\) This may be the case for the exhibition context and curating Edwards refers to. Although there has been


\(^{265}\) Edwards, “Photography’s Default History”. 
curatorial attention to vernacular photography, many exhibitions still bring up instrumental photography in relation to art.266

The interest in vernacular imagery for artists is not a new thing. The appropriation of vernacular and instrumental images was of interest, for example, to avant-garde artists of the 1920s and 1930s.267 I’m Google shares similarities with many such projects like Moholy-Nagy’s *Painting, Photography, Film*, a book of scientific, instrumental, journalistic and artistic images alike. In his book, photographs are addressed with a caption as well as an origin. Moholy-Nagy linked images to their original context (e.g., advertising, space photography) upholding their instrumental status rather than suppressing it.268 In a similar manner, I’m Google makes a context for the photographs transparent. Upon clicking the viewer is taken to where each photograph can be found in the abundance of Internet imagery.

There are many artists who make use of Internet-based applications like Google Maps’ Street View and Google Earth.269 Their work is often understood as ‘appropriating’ images from the Internet. Taking screenshots off the Internet and reframing them or just simply materialising them in prints is familiar from works by Penelope Umbrico, Erik Kessels and many others. Images in Kelberman’s collections are ready-mades or appropriations in so far as they have been collected from the Internet, and the person or entity who originally produced them is not the same as the author of the work. This reading is, however, not entirely accurate. Particularly in the case of the photographers/artists who photograph Google Street View,270 the line between *taking* photos and appropriating them becomes very thin or even non-existent. Acquiring photographs from the landscape formed by different image applications on the Internet is not that different from taking a camera and pointing it to a material world.271
It is said that the twentieth century photographer Walker Evans was interested in the vernacular.\textsuperscript{272} Not only did he take photographs of objects like street signs, but he also collected the actual objects, claiming, “they are almost the same thing”.\textsuperscript{273} I suggest that collecting photos on the Internet is ‘almost the same thing’ as taking photographs with a camera. As camera devices have become more and more algorithm-operated, it is not far-fetched to align acquiring images from online with taking photographs with a portable camera as similar photographic acts. Cole points out that, “The ‘neutral’ and panoptic eye of Google itself becomes the camera, and, under these conditions the photographer’s task becomes curatorial”.\textsuperscript{274} I would suggest further that the computer, mobile phone screen and the multitude of applications that can be used to capture images become the camera. And the person who uses that device is not making selections like a curator, but framing and snapping like a photographer. What I’m Google shares with the mentioned artists is tackling the abundance of images and putting them in order like a photographer making a series would. However, while many of the artworks embracing the ordinary take everyday photography by the public as their subject, they do not recreate the mundane act of interacting online. I’m Google manages to stay in the realm of the ordinary, instead of moving away from it to an exhibition space.

The everyday act of googling

In Kelberman’s work I am intrigued by the way she describes the way the work has come into existence. In her statement on the I’m Google Tumblr blog she writes:

The blog came out of my natural tendency to spend long hours obsessing over Google Image searches, collecting photos I found beautiful and storing them by theme. Often the images that interest me are of industrial or municipal materials or everyday photo snapshots.

I feel that my experience wandering through Google Image Search and YouTube hunting for obscure information and encountering unexpected results is a very common one. My blog serves as a visual representation of this phenomenon.\textsuperscript{275}

This work is performative in the sense I brought up in the previous chapter. The logic of the work can be articulated as a sentence: “I am searching interesting images in Google Image Search and collecting then on a Tumblr site,” and this sentence is guiding its execution. In terms of initiation, the work began from an everyday routine of browsing the Internet. This places the artistic act as something that emerges from the experience and observations of day-to-day life. In the same

\textsuperscript{272} Chéroux, “The Art of the Oxymoron”.
\textsuperscript{273} Campany, “Almost the Same Thing”.
\textsuperscript{274} Cole, \textit{Known and Strange Things}, 182.
\textsuperscript{275} Dina Kelberman, \textit{I’m Google}. 
Figure 6  Dina Kelberman, *I’m Google* 2011-, online work. Screenshots taken by the author on September 4, 2023.
way that Zoe Leonard started *Analogue* from her doorstep, *I’m Google* is a result of a mundane act from home, from where Kelberman is browsing the Internet and then recording this act through posting selected images on the blog. Her work then, is presenting an act of someone doing this.

On the *I’m Google* site, Kelberman describes the pace and rhythm of accumulating the blog: “The site is constantly updated week after week, batch by batch, sometimes in bursts, sometimes very slowly.” The fact that the artwork is not updated on a regular basis reflects the mundane experience of doing things all in all. There are routines, but the everyday very much also consists of unstructured acts, when one’s doings in time are guided or restricted by for instance economic limitations, other people, emotional constraints or just circumstantial happenings.

According to Kelberman, googling different things is “common”, and I interpret the statement so that this artistic work operates in the realm of anyone’s everyday. The work, as she says, is a “representation of this phenomena” (of googling), but I would say that it is not only *about* our everyday but in fact emulates a quotidian experience. I also presume the work happens as part of the everyday from a sofa, rather than planning a shoot, preparing equipment, taking the plane to the far end of the world and bringing back trophies. The differences between these two kinds of photographic acts have of course to do with the bodily movements and the embodied experiences evoked by them. In order to take photographs off the Internet, one does not need to get out of the house. Taking place online, the work is accessible to anyone who is googling, and it is not exhibited, for example, in a gallery. Unlike many others using googling as their method, Kelberman’s output is not removed from its mundane origins, and even though she selects the photographs she uses, the work is not based on a meticulous scoping method.

**Digital networks and the image world**

Kelberman’s work presents googling images essentially as a shared practice. In her aligning herself with the “common” public, ideas around the mutual use of photography by both an everyperson and an artist start to unfold. Like Rubinstein and Sluis have noted, online platforms such as Flickr do not separate spectators and authors, but present “an array of temporary constellations of images which...”

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276 Dina Kelberman, *I’m Google*.

277 As mentioned, there are others who have made artworks based on found images on the Internet and on the act of googling. The difference here is how this activity is framed. For example, Belgian artist Mischka Henner’s *No Man’s Land* is based on a method in which he searched online conversations and other materials for possible areas for sex workers and as a result represents, according to his website: “isolated women occupying the margins of southern European environments, shot entirely with Google Street View”. Henner’s framework lies in the documentary tradition and replays the idea of a photojournalist representing those on the margins. His work does not refer to the act of googling itself as a mundane, domestic activity. The (gendered) differences between repetitive, mundane photography and spectacular photo-opportunities will be brought up in more detail in the next chapter, Foraging the Everyday. https://mishkahenner.com/No-Man-s-Land, and Kate Albers, “Public Life and the Private Screen: Mishka Henner’s No Man’s Land,” in Circulation Exchange, accessed October 31, 2023, http://circulationexchange.org/articles/nomansland.html.
are activated by users". In the everyday practices of both professionals and non-professionals, publishing work on social media platforms creates a space where these practices become intermixed and exceedingly difficult to separate from each other. On these platforms the division into vernacular and art is challenged.

While differences remain to an extent, and the traditional contexts for photography such as art galleries or news media continue to exist, these practices find a common context in online sharing. With the establishing of digital photography and the possibility to share images online, domestic photography practices exit the private sphere and personal photographs are published online like any other images.

The distinction between amateurs and professionals has become fluid because the two share the same online platforms such as Instagram. In the daily image flow, images are intermixed so that one gets potentially, depending on what they choose to follow, in their Instagram feed equally family snapshots, pictures of kittens, professional photographic shots, journalistic content and artworks. In addition, many professional photographers tend to mix personal, everyday photographs with ones they are doing, for instance, for editorial assignments.

This results in the myriad of photographs being experienced in a common context of social media platforms; rather than in the traditionally separated terrains of home, museum or a newspaper.

Up until the twenty-first century, the images that surrounded the common public were photographs in the press and editorials, advertising, and to an extent, scientific photographs. Vilém Flusser said in 1984 of the abundance of photographs of the day: “Photographs are ubiquitous: in albums, magazines, books, shop windows, on billboards, carrier bags, cans". Family and tourist photographs would be shared in the private sphere. The ubiquity of photography is a topic brought up throughout photography’s history. But it is only through the developments in digital online sharing that the images that circulate and surround us are by our peers: friends, colleagues, neighbours, people sharing our hobbies and just plain strangers.

283 Photographs as social artefacts were the carte-des-visite portraits of 1850s. See Stephen Burstow, “The Carte de Visite and Domestic Digital Photography,” Photographies, 9, no. 3 (2016): 287-305, DOI: 10.1080/17540763.2016.1202309 , or Annie Rudd, “Victorians Living in Public: Cartes de Visite as 19th-Century Social Media,” Photography and Culture, 9, no 3 (2016): 195–217, DOI: 10.1080/17514517.2016.1265370. Another example of a social use of private family and holiday photographs was slideshows in the latter half of the twentieth century. In some Western families it was common to give a presentation of holiday slides to guests. I know this because my parents used to do it in the 1970s. Also, Jane Birkin discusses this tradition in her book. Birkin, Archive, Photography, 71.
In her book *On Photography*, published in 1977, Susan Sontag also addresses the ubiquity of photographs. She taps into the photographic culture of her day in a way that entails its multifaceted aspects: the images themselves and their ontological existence, but also what drives their making on the level of the individual. I think it is notable that, coming from an era of representation critique, when most texts were dealing with semiotic analysis, the discursive impact of images, or looking at photographs, Sontag in her text in fact takes up some ways people take photographs. Sontag’s writing feels simultaneously prescient and anachronistic. It provides here a ground against which I can reflect everyday photographic acts of the present day.

In many passages throughout *On Photography*, Sontag refers to some ordinary motivations for acquiring photographs. She describes these right from the beginning of her text. Taking photographs is, according to her, “mainly a social rite, a defence against anxiety, and a tool of power.” Tourists take up photography in what she calls a “friendly imitation of work” so that they have something to do. In the last essay of the book “The Image World”, Sontag returns to travelling. Travelling, as well as on the other hand home life, are both potentially dependent on photographs:

[…]

[...]

passionate collecting of them [photographs] has special appeal for those confined – either by choice, incapacity, or coercion – to indoor space.

Photograph collections can be used to make a substitute world, keyed to exalting or consoling or tantalizing images.

Indeed, the vastness of images circulating daily, which Kelberman’s work points to, could be understood as an ‘Image World’ that Sontag is describing. On the other hand, how weighty are day-to-day photographs as images and acts? While the abundance of images has only accelerated, the photographic images themselves do not have the same meaning they did fifty years ago, nor are photographic acts

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necessarily "events", as Sontag states. Taking photographs is so ordinary, often so unspectacular, and firmly part of everyday experience that to describe it as a compulsion, like Sontag did might be an overstatement. There is, however, sometimes something a little forced, and especially dutiful in the activity of, for instance, recording one's meals, as if the habit of photographing was expected from us, within the daily pace of manoeuvring with objects and customs.

At the same time, Sontag's views are reminiscent of the fears that circulate in the present day, about the danger of how people can lose themselves in photographing, the concept of 'selfie-shaming' being a prime example of this. Warnings are raised of how one is more engaged with constructing an 'image world' that is a false façade than interacting in real life.

For Sontag, photographing gives an illusion of control over the world through acquisition. In the present day, the real power is not yielded through people holding a camera but is held by the service providers and algorithms that collect information about the likes and uses of those images. The constellations of surveillance and control have more to do with the platform providers as well as with how and by whom artificial intelligence is being taught and how computer-generated images operate. Sontag’s critique towards an image world entails a similar understanding of photography as serving the needs of capitalist society. In Sontag’s words: “It [capitalist society] needs to furnish vast amounts of entertainment in order to stimulate buying and anesthetize the injuries of class, race, and sex.” For Sontag, images were used to reinforce consumerism but also on the other hand for institutional surveillance. It seems that the companies offering interaction online belong to both categories.

288 Sontag states: “A photograph is not just the result of an encounter between an event and a photographer; picture-taking is an event in itself, and one with ever more peremptory rights—to interfere with, to invade, or to ignore whatever is going on. Our very sense of situation is now articulated by the camera’s interventions.” Sontag, On Photography, 11. Erica Larsson notes in her dissertation how Sontag's take on photographic acts is: “focusing on what they take away from these acts rather than what they bring to them. Nevertheless, she recognises the ways in which taking photographs involves (the appearance of) participating in some kind of event together with others, of attempting to make a connection in a situation when other ways of participating seem unavailable.” Erika Larsson, Photographic Engagements: Belonging and Affective Encounters in Contemporary Photography (Göteborg: Makadam, 2018), 129. And much like Larsson, I am more inclined to be interested in what value photographic acts have, rather than how they pose a threat.


291 For example, Sontag, On Photography, 155.

292 Noted by Gomez Cruz and Lehmuskallio: “By being able to provide, translate and transform these connected interactions, commercial service providers and manufacturers of digital camera devices play a crucial and powerful role in suggesting how people connect and interact with each other.” Gómez Cruz and Lehmuskallio, Digital Photography.

293 It is a commonly known fact that the people are not the clients of big companies such as Google or Facebook but rather a source of data that is then sold to advertisers, the true clients. However, people are increasingly dependent on those applications, and human agency has to be practised, kept, and reclaimed within those limits, at least for now. There are also alternative social media platforms, or search engines, but they remain on the margins.

294 This discussion is beyond the scope of this work.

In addition to knowledge, a consumerist relationship to events is endorsed by photographs. For Sontag, this means that both familiar events as well as those outside our experience become available, resulting in a blur between the two. Consumption may also be an accurate word to describe how images – and through them events – are taken in and spat out on social media. Consumption is cultivated and embedded in the structures of social media sites. Facebook feeds us whatever the algorithm decides, following whatever logic it sees fit to get us hooked on using it more and receiving advertisements from its customers.

This situation of the shifting of photographic power, however, calls for a closer look at how individuals operate within the limits and parameters defining this world. Alas, I argue that it has other kinds of practical dimensions as well, many that are brought necessarily through mass photographic practices. A focus on human-centred, anecdotal and poetic dimensions of everyday photography is therefore vital. If these aspects go unnoticed, there is a risk that something in the current image culture will go overlooked; something that could even present a small act of resistance against the algorithms that make up the spaces where images can be published. It is also a question of how people operate within the framework offered by the grid of social media platforms as well as respond to and, possibly, remake its possibilities.

Social media sites may feed, or force-feed, us, but it is still people who share photographs and should have agency left. As sharing goes beyond communication, is there space for people to feed themselves and others with photographs? What kinds of social and material interaction can be read in everyday photographic acts? Could they entail feeding, caressing, patting and stroking each other with photographs?

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296 Sontag, On Photography, 156.
298 Very recently, theorist Michelle Henning has argued that: “Certainly, data markets have far-reaching political effects, and their products are used to engineer our experiences. But this does not mean that their operations merit attention to the exclusion of our own experience of interacting with social media. The assumption that our affective and haptic engagement is more trivial than the underlying hard economic reality echoes not only the flawed Marxist model of a cultural superstructure and economic base, but also an old model of a supposedly ‘feminine’ social realm concerned with visual distractions and ‘eye candy’.” Michelle Henning, “That Liking Feeling: Mood, Emotion, and Social Media Photography,” in Ubiquity: Photography’s Multitudes (Leuven University Press, 2021), 232.
299 Michel de Certeau in his Practice of Everyday Life addressed the way people operate within certain conditions, but in their own way. An example of this is language, which is imposed on its users, but it is people who speak, and appropriate and reappropriate language. He writes: “Such an objective assumes that–users make (bricolent) innumerable and infinitesimal transformations of and within the dominant cultural economy in order to adapt it to their own interests and their own rules. We must determine the procedures, bases, effects, and possibilities of this collective activity.” Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life. 1, 2. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2013), xiv.
Serial photography as an everyday act

What if we approach photography not as something that produces art objects, nor as a hobby, but as an inherent part of our daily activities? So far, I have discussed how the mundane and the everyday inform artistic practices. Can an insight into the methods of (post)conceptual artists/photographers be used to access and describe quotidian photography as well? If the cases discussed earlier present an artistic attitude reaching towards the experience of the everyday and originating from an immediate environment, then how is the more common experience of quotidian photography thinkable?

In light of the recent developments of camera phones and digital cameras, can we think of anything as commonplace as taking a photograph and sharing it online? If a person photographs as part of their daily routines, is it then not part of the everyday in a way that escapes not only musings on art, but also critical assessments on language and representations? The experience of photographing is commonly shared, and is ongoing: many times it happens almost literally ‘every day’ and as such is woven firmly into the texture of daily life. An immediate and descriptive approach to discuss it is necessary.

Cultural theorist Ben Highmore recognises the many ways aesthetics has importance in ordinary life. According to him, while experiences are personal, “aesthetics posits emotions and affects as social, collective and exterior.” In so far as photography plays a part in the ways people respond to other people and to the world, the outlook Highmore describes is identifiable. He describes the relationship of aesthetics and the ordinary in the following:

 […] aesthetics names the exteriority of ‘interior’ life and the sociality of passions as they circulate in ways that are interpersonal and transpersonal. This is a material world made up of seemingly immaterial forces (such as ambition, pity and pride). If aesthetics has come to name the ordinary and extraordinary productions and experiences associated with art (or the arts), it also, more fundamentally names a world of rising and diminishing intensities of affect that congregate and dissipate in society.

In order to discuss photography as an everyday, mundane act, it is useful to turn to everyday aesthetics. Writing on everyday aesthetics, the philosopher Arnold Berleant outlines a turn in the tradition of aesthetics focused on art and nature as

300 The literary theorist Rita Felski has paid attention to how: “On the one hand, the everyday is associated with habit, repetition, convention, the unthinking performance of routine activities—all those qualities frequently excoriated in modern art and criticism as indices of existential alienation or of conservatism and petit bourgeois complacency. On the other hand, an element of sheer necessity adheres to such elements of everyday living that the modern tradition of negative aesthetics seemed ill-equipped to capture or comprehend.” Rita Felski, “Everyday Aesthetics,” The Minnesota Review 2009, no. 71-72 (1 May 2009): 174. https://doi.org/10.1215/00265667-2009-71-72-171.
301 Highmore, Ordinary Lives, 9.
302 Highmore, Ordinary Lives, 23.
objects, a tradition that has its origins in a Cartesian worldview. There have been changes in the last century in art, and a shifting understanding of art from objects to more inclusive perception of art, for example as processual. These changes have also expanded the way aesthetics responds to these phenomena. In addition, the environment is seen less as solely natural and more as also encompassing urban and built space. This means that aesthetic appreciation is not directed only towards objects that are viewed in a disinterested way removed from other sensations or experiences.

Everyday aesthetics moves away from a spectator-oriented view and instead proposes an embracive understanding of how aesthetics would include all sensory experience, not only art.

I concentrate on ‘everyday aesthetics’ mostly as it is defined by the philosopher Yuriko Saito and has been developed since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Everyday aesthetics, as it departs from traditional aesthetics as a theory exclusively for art, opens new possibilities in relation to photography, and particularly photography as an everyday activity. I take ‘art’ to mean practices that are defined as art either consciously by their practitioners or in a more institutional sense. Because the photographic medium in many cases is not easily situated as entirely functional, nor solely as art, everyday aesthetics feels like a particularly pertinent way to approach the social, embodied and aesthetic qualities of daily photography.

What is of specific interest to everyday aesthetics on a pragmatic level is not fine art objects, but everyday, often utilitarian objects, and particularly the bodily sensations and activities that are formative of the experience of the ordinary.

As an example, everyday aesthetics concentrates on acts such as

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303 Berleant describes that a disinterested approach towards aesthetics is from Immanuel Kant’s attempt to bring a more universal, scientific attitude to aesthetic judgement, which is necessarily always subjective. See Arnold Berleant, “Aesthetic Sensibility,” Ambiances, 30 March 2015, https://doi.org/10.4000/ambiances.526.


305 Many writers on everyday aesthetics describe a turn towards the way enlightenment philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, who first came up with the word ‘aesthetics’ in 1735, defined aesthetics as, quoted by Thomas Leddy, “the science of how things are to be cognized by means of the senses.” Leddy, The Extraordinary in the Ordinary, 18. See also Berleant, “Aesthetic Sensibility,” and Highmore, Ordinary Lives, 24.

306 David Bate, writing on Jacques Rancière, has described photography’s relationship to aesthetics as “awkward,” and views this to be a result of photography’s young status as fine art. Bate notes: “Because so far photography has had a rather awkward relation to aesthetics. While art photography is part of these discussions in contemporary art and philosophy, ‘photography’ is nevertheless an apparatus that is active across many other spheres of cultural practice too. Some of these uses have little or no relation to art.” David Bate, “Jacques Rancière Aesthetics and Photography,” in The Routledge Companion to Photography Theory, ed. Mark Durden and Jane Tormey (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 37–51. 37. Rancière’s aesthetics is also central to Ben Highmore’s inquiry into quotidian aesthetics. However, this thesis does not go deeper into his philosophy.


dwelling, cleaning, eating, social interacting, et cetera. The questions for everyday aesthetics are not necessarily to do with finished products, but processes, acts, experiences and relations.

Writing on everyday aesthetics and photography, the philosopher Thomas Leddy describes the way art photography enters the exploration of the everyday:

Insofar as it is a meditation on the nature of photography itself, art photography explores and reflects upon the vast range of photographic practice, sometimes quite directly in the case of post-modern photography, and this is a form of aesthetic exploration of everyday aesthetics. Insofar as it is a meditation on the other subjects of photography, for example, the home, the workplace, the streets of the city, and even works of art (dance, architecture, etc.) it is also an exploration of everyday aesthetics.309

Art photography often takes ‘the everyday’ as its subject matter. Art photography also explores everyday aesthetics as it deals with everyday photographic practices. However, photography does not only mediate its subjects or reflect its own condition. Photographs and photographic acts exist as part of our everyday life.

Serial photography can be put in the realm of the everyday through discussing it as an everyday act. Photography in both vernacular and professional practices can be placed within the very lived experience of the everyday so that it is part of the texture of our daily existence. The aesthetic pleasure one gets from photography lies not only in looking, or even attaining images, but also in the simple possibility of recording daily existence with a camera. This means that everyday surroundings for people familiar with photography have a constant potential as pictures. This potential defines our immediate environment as something that can be transformed into images. Experiencing the immediate everyday becomes entangled with the experience of photographing it.

Taking a photograph can be considered an aesthetic experience in itself and as embodied making. Photography, granted, is an object for the study of aesthetics. Photography is an object for aesthetic consideration in so far as aesthetics is understood as dealing with art and images. There is aesthetic pleasure in looking at photographs, while there is also aesthetic pleasure in producing images. These experiences entail photographing for artistic purposes, but also for the pleasure of the photographic act itself.

The approach cannot completely overlook images themselves, as it is impossible to separate photography from photographs; after all, an obvious motivation to photograph is to produce an image. Yet, it seems that as the sheer accumulation of everyday images is increasing, and concentration on single photographs becomes more and more difficult, the photographic act gains relatively more significance.

In the last chapters of the thesis, in relation to *doing* photography, I bring up acts other than taking of photographs such as the acts of gathering, sharing, caring and grooming.

**Vernacular practices - the everyday landscape of digital photography**

The relationship between photographic practice and the images it produces is manifold, since they both inform each other. There is a complex web of interaction feeding back and forth between photographing as an act and photographic representations. This interaction is mostly tangible on the said digital platforms as people share their own pictures and view pictures by others, often either purposefully or inadvertently as a response to existing images.

Sometimes it is possible to see that one person has shared an image of, for example, a sunset, and another person adds in the comments their own image of the same sunset, but from a different viewpoint. The sharing is then not only straightforward ‘sharing’, as in posting an image, but the photographs, together with the experienced landscape, form a space where experiences are exchanged and shared. With the aesthetic appreciation rising from everyday aesthetics, we can turn our attention away from the appearance or artistic values of the taken photos and direct it towards the aesthetic pleasures that are imbedded in the photographic acts which include the social dimension of sharing the pleasure with others. The digital platforms are then a malleable environment where different practices co-exist. The digital image world forms an everyday landscape within which images are shared and looked at. It is a landscape where art and the everyday join.

Photography produces objects which sometimes belong to the realm of art, but while it produces objects (photographs) for an art context it can also produce everyday objects, like the functional photographs explored and displayed in Kelberman’s *I’m Google*, as well as more broadly, any photographs that are shared and consumed on different online platforms as part of our daily social interaction. And the ‘doing’ in photography encompasses both taking photographs as well as picture editing and sharing pictures online.

The difficulties in addressing photography as an everyday act arise because photography is sometimes viewed from a pictorial approach that assumes that photographing is necessarily an act aiming to produce a lasting image, an aesthetic object. This is despite the fact that there is a range of academic interest in photography as practice, focusing on visual representations as well as material acts.\(^\text{310}\) Photography is in these theories generally seen as a pictorial practice,

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\(^\text{310}\) Gómez Cruz and Lehmuskallio, *Digital Photography*. 
and has been articulated, for example, as “kinaesthetic sociability” meaning an approach that entails both the practice of photography and visual representations.

The pictorial seems to be firmly embedded in the quotidian conventions of photography: a particularly vivid sunset is readily turned into a pleasurable photographic picture. However, the everydayness of photography comes from its use in the flow of images, where even heightened moments become part of the mass of the ordinary. This is aptly pointed out in the work of the artist Penelope Umbrico. In her ongoing project *Suns from Sunsets from Flickr*, in which she has extracted images of people photographing the sunset from 2006 onwards, the sunset is shown to be a popular subject, creating an ever-increasing mass of its representations.

A beautiful sunset is pleasurable to view. And, as noted by the researcher Annebella Pollen in her writing on mass photography, despite the ubiquity of its representations, “each photograph is always unique to the photographer; they were each individually moved to record it.” The beautiful sunset then is part of the everyday experience, and although picturesque, it is also a material phenomenon open to an affective response. This is an experience of taking a photograph, and its meaning cannot be downplayed despite it being common. Repetition tends to make things ordinary, both everyday experiences as well as their depictions. What is seen repeatedly becomes part of the ordinary.

Photographing a sunset enters the everyday experience as repetition; through posting a photograph of a sunset online, one joins the hum of people sharing a photograph of the same subject. The question here is not whether an image of a sunset belongs to the consideration of everyday aesthetics, but if the act of photographing and sharing it are everyday acts. To what extent are quotidian acts of photographing and sharing similar to mundane, everyday acts such as eating, sleeping, laundry, and to what extent is everyday photography ‘aesthetic’ in a more traditional sense; as belonging to the realm of extraordinary experiences, and of art and artistic expression, promoting a disinterested look?

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311 Frosh, “The Gestural Image”.
312 This is based on my own observation of some local Facebook groups. The phenomenon of sunsets is also materialised in Penelope Umbrico’s ongoing artwork. Umbrico, Penelope, *Suns from Sunsets from Flickr*, ongoing 2006, accessed April 29, 2021, http://www.penelopeumbrico.net/index.php/project/suns-from-sunsets-from-flickr/.
313 She cites some 30 million sunsets on the image-sharing platform Flickr in 2016. See Umbrico, *Suns*.
Figure 7  A Sunset, excerpt from *Orders / In the Year 2021*, a series of colour photographs by the author published in the appendix.
Questions for everyday aesthetics

Aesthetics scholar Kevin Melchionne has provided a clear, despite rigid, overview on everyday aesthetic, claiming that the everyday as a theme in art does not present the everyday. He says, “Having the everyday as thematic content does not make an object or practice part of everyday life”. In his definition of what can be considered to be in the realm of the everyday are objects or practices that are ongoing, common, activity, and typically, but not necessarily aesthetic. This somewhat restricted formulation of the everyday feels approachable and it falls naturally to apply it to photography. Photography takes place daily, it is widely practised, it is an activity that doesn't necessarily produce lasting results, and it is aesthetic. However, as Melchionne notes, there are cases that will test these boundaries.

Photography, in that it happens along other everyday actions, is one of those cases that fall between mundane, routinised acts on the one hand and artistic, heightened attempts on the other. People take photographs when they are making notes, but they also take photographs of everyday happenings, aiming for an aesthetic effect. This can be understood simply in the way people take photographs almost automatically, as part of their daily life, yet on the other hand when a single photograph is taken, there seems to be an expectation for it to lift the experienced, ordinary moment into something more spectacular.

The effect that photography has in the everyday is on the one hand ordinary, and on the other heightening. According to Thomas Leddy, “Rather than detracting, the aesthetic experiences we get from photography enhance the aesthetic experiences that come from direct interaction with both natural and human environments”. From this perspective, photography enriches what we see. Photographing one's everyday can be seen as a way to experience even more; to strengthen and enforce the experience of viewing one's surroundings. Also, existing photographic representations influence what we see as interesting or beautiful. This has to do with images, and with the way an environment may be viewed with an intention to photograph. It is, though, not a question here of how photographic representations, like utilitarian photographs, enter everyday aesthetics, but rather how the experience of photography as a practice can be understood through everyday aesthetics.

In her assessment of how everyday life has been neglected in Western aesthetics, Yuriko Saito notes that it has been a purpose for art to claim its difference to everyday life. The features that separate everyday actions from fine art objects, or actions, include “absence of definite and identifiable object-hood and authorship, our literal engagement, transience and impermanence of the object, and the

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316 Melchionne, “The Definition of Everyday Aesthetics”.
3. AN EVERYDAY ATTITUDE

primacy of practical values of the object”.\(^{318}\) Therefore, photographic objects as art traditionally, particularly in modernist and to an extent in some contemporary art practices, respond to the art world’s expectations and definitions as authorially produced, permanent objects that have no use value other than being ‘art’. Everyday photographs, in contrast, are often literally understood, like for instance family portraits, and the images on social media platforms are not permanent. Many of these photographs have direct, and sole, practical value when, for example, people are selling their old items on various online second-hand platforms.

It is also purposeful to ask what are the similarities of artistic productions and the everyday. The processual is a feature in contemporary art, particularly in the tradition stemming from the conceptual art of the 1960s, as discussed at the beginning of the thesis. Ephemeral artworks, such as certain land art works, were intended as temporary, happening in a specific location at a specific time. It has been historically the case that the art object is perceived as a completed, particular artefact, and that even ephemeral artistic acts have gained a status as an art object through their documentation.\(^{319}\) Even though they were born as a critique against institutional art, these acts were also framed by the institution of art itself; as an alternative way to make art. Participatory art projects more recently, that take ordinary people or locations as part of an artwork, also deal with the quotidian. Saito expresses a problem of art addressing the everyday: “The artist (or the critic) has to announce that it is a work of art, though it is just like, or a slice of, everyday life”.\(^{320}\) If these projects were not framed as ‘art’ they would not necessarily be visible or gain any recognition. Instead, they would be lost in the ordinary. This is what, according to Saito, makes an artistic capturing of the everyday impossible, or at least proposes a dilemma.

However, the actual experience of taking a photograph escapes categories like ‘art’, ‘amateur’ or ‘professional’, at least to an extent. Artistic creation is a result of an everyday doing. Artists make their work in the sphere where art is in process and is subject to alterations. The everyday in how it is formed is subjective, dependent on whatever makes up the everyday for anyone. Artists do not exist in an outside position in relation to the everyday. When such an outside position is acted out is mostly when an everyday phenomenon is taken as a subject for art, and the artist mediates and frames that phenomenon as art. It is reasonable to say that artistic work itself belongs to the realm of the everyday.

For an artist, art is labour that must be addressed: a day-to-day bundle of tasks that need to be done. This labour includes many choices that can be considered aesthetic in the same way as in everyday tasks. These choices are often mundane and banal. For example, if I am preparing photographs for an exhibition, I have


\(^{319}\) Lucy Lippard recounts how artworks that were first imagined to be beyond the commodity market, soon however were shown and sold in “the world’s most prestigious galleries”. Lucy R. Lippard, “Postface, in six years: the dematerialization of the art object, 1966 to 1972,” in Alberro and Stimson, *Conceptual Art*, 294.

to adjust the colours, but I also need to manually remove dust and scratches from a scanned negative in Photoshop. While these photographic objects will end up being framed as art, nevertheless, many steps in the process are tedious and almost automatic. Some artists outsource this work, while some do it themselves in a lack of resources, or they see, for example, framing their own pictures as handicraft and an inherent part of their artistic practice. This highlights the fact that both artistic practice and everyday acts are subject to ambiguity.

A question for everyday aesthetics is the paradox that if an aesthetic experience is viewed as a heightened moment, then one steps outside the everyday experience. Saito expresses this in the following: “by making the ordinary extraordinary and rendering the familiar strange, while we gain aesthetic experiences thus made possible, we also pay the price by compromising the very everydayness of the everyday.”\(^{321}\) An illustration of this paradox can be read in Ben Highmore’s account of reading John Dewey’s aesthetics. It is precisely when Dewey attempts to explain how the mundane is not aesthetic that he in fact ends up articulating the everyday as experiential.\(^{322}\)

The problem with photography is that, as it represents moments in time, expressing the actual flow of life is challenging. There is of course the context of representing ‘the everyday’ through a mediation of everyday practices and processes and bringing them to the realm of the art world, but then they completely step outside the everyday experience. A more pertinent question, however, concerns the dynamics of photographic acts. How are photographic acts ordinary, and how are they extraordinary? How do these two poles take place in everyday photography? Moreover, how are repetition and seriality linked to photography as an everyday act, and how does serial photography in the everyday shape and give meaning to it? These questions will be discussed in the next chapters.

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\(^{322}\) Highmore, *Ordinary Lives*, 44.
4. FORAGING THE EVERYDAY

Christina Holmlund’s N60°09´2 E24°56´1, habit and shared experience

Collecting and gathering

What would be a productive way to start describing and approaching an ‘everyday attitude’ in photographic practice? How do photographic acts take place in the realm of the everyday? In his *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, Vilém Flusser addressed photographic gestures through the metaphor of hunting. He says, “This is the ancient act of stalking which goes back to the paleolithic hunter in the tundra.”\(^{323}\) The metaphor of hunting is one that has been cultivated in many instances in photographic writing.\(^{324}\) Susan Sontag brings up the analogy of the gun in relation to the camera and makes a point about the way in which English language words like ‘shooting’ and ‘aiming’ are familiar expressions for describing photographic action.\(^{325}\)

Despite being old-fashioned, the hunting metaphor remains surprisingly persistent. I would like to propose some other wordings for photographic acts, other than the ones in the realm of the ‘shooting vocabulary’. A much-cited analogy\(^{326}\) attributed to the artist Jeff Wall is one that divides photographers into “hunters” and “farmers”.\(^{327}\) This analogy leans towards the masculine, at least if these activities are understood in historical terms as being performed mostly by men. According to Wall’s division, the former are looking for moments to shoot, the latter constructing their images over time. Hunting and farming are rather complex and skilled forms of human activity, and both require tools that are sophisticated, as well as acquired skills from their users. As it is useful here to look at photography along the axis of those kind of activities of human labour, I propose that a third, no less or more archaic than the mentioned, of *gathering* should be considered. Gathering could be seen as an activity that doesn’t necessarily require strategy, plans, strength or massive equipment.

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\(^{323}\) Flusser and Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, 33.


\(^{326}\) The analogue credited to Wall seems to circulate on different writings that can be found online, but these texts do not mention the actual origins of the idea; instead they end up referring to each other.

\(^{327}\) His analogue appears as a picture caption to his work, *Passerby*, 1996, a photograph that perhaps embodies the staged, tableau-like photography of Wall, while depicting a ‘hunted’ image, in Cotton, *The Photograph as Contemporary Art*, 49.
The gendered division of labour in prehistoric hunter-gatherer communities has been challenged in recent research. However, the myth of ‘women as gatherers’ provides here a useful trope for paying attention to the kind of acts that take place in the sphere of the domestic and tend not to be seen as important and exciting as the more spectacular actions like hunting. Compared to hunting and farming, gathering is carried out without sophisticated apparati, and as such is an activity available for pretty much anyone, and can be done as part of domestic duties and child caring. We can’t imagine a hunter carrying a child on their back while hunting, but we can imagine gathering together with a child. Equally, an everyday photographic act is no problem amongst other duties at home, but travelling to faraway places with heavy equipment might present one.

The temporal dynamics are different to the actions I described: hunting, aiming and shooting take place first as acts of searching and waiting, then firing a weapon. There is an abrupt moment that has instant significance. The temporality of gathering, in contrast, is a repetitive pattern of acts: looking, picking up, and this many times over. Flusser describes a person photographing as giving an impression of waiting. This idea of waiting and stalking feels remote in the present day, since “the photographer” tends to go about their ordinary duties and take a photograph when they see something noteworthy. These acts are routinised, such as taking a photograph of one’s meal, or they can take place in a more heightened setting such as a party.

This kind of action is allowed by the camera phone that many people tend to carry wherever they go. In Flusser’s writing, the photographer operates around the programme of the camera; in other words, within those parameters that the camera as a technical device dictates, an operative that then has an effect on what photographs look like. It also influences what is photographed. In the case of a smart phone, the traditional technical features that operate on the axis of shutter speed (time) and aperture (space) are shunted to the background, and people tend to use the automatic mode the camera provides. It is rather the platforms on which images are published that tend to set the technological and cultural limits for photographing. The temporal difference here may be that the filters and effects are usually applied afterwards, and hence they don’t need to be considered when taking a photograph.

329 See Plane Collection in the preface of this thesis.
330 Flusser and Flusser, Towards a Philosophy of Photography, 33.
331 The word photographer is here used to mean a person who takes photographs.
332 My personal experience is that even when a smart phone has a professional mode in its camera app, it is not as straightforward and usable as with actual cameras. Sometimes certain features such as aperture size are missing, and a shallow depth of focus can be applied afterwards. The camera just records as much information as possible and it can be manipulated later.
It is also important to take into account that much of everyday photography relies on a literal mediation of events through images. This is helped by the automatic functions of the camera, or the simple fact that most quotidian photographers are not dabbling with apertures or shutter speeds, but tend to rely on the automatic mode, which is often one that optimises both the time and the space ends of camera’s possibilities. This results in photographs that show as much detail as possible and aim for an appearance of even exposure.333

In their writing on digital imagery, Rubinstein and Sluis note how the rift between an amateur and a professional is narrowed by technology. For example, the live view function of a camera makes it easy to “see intuitively as the lens/camera sees”334 when a photographer attempts to translate a three-dimensional scene onto a two-dimensional film plane.335 According to the writers, camera phones that are embedded in daily life transform the way a person taking photographs is in relation to their subjects:

The ability to take photographs without becoming a photographer is appealing not only because it makes photography less technological but also because with the absence of the camera the photographer does not become an observer but remains intimately connected to the subject of photography. At the same time, the act of wearing a camera at all times opens up a different relationship to space, turning everything in one’s immediate environment into a potential subject for a snapshot.336

The pre-historic human can be imagined as someone who experienced terrain as a sphere for action and existence. Reading a landscape was essential for the early hunters to find suitable spaces for living; they navigated following the shapes of the ground and celestial objects.337 If the metaphor of the photographer as a hunter looking for prey, or a gatherer picking up food, is taken further, photography may present a similar embodied look over one’s environment and render the camera a device for relating to one’s surroundings and responding to it. Landscape has been developed as a concept in art to connote an image that is framed through a distant look, but everyday photography may present a more pragmatic and embodied

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333 Daniel Palmer discusses this in his article: “Point-and-shoot cameras increasingly shift creative decision making to the camera instead of the person taking the picture, offering automated modes labelled ‘intelligent auto’ – which detects your environment and adjusts the camera’s settings accordingly, choosing the most appropriate scene mode.” This seems to be two-fold, as Daniel Palmer’s article discusses: while many cameras offer almost unlimited chances for post-editing, these are used only minimally. Daniel Palmer, “Redundant Photographs: Cameras, Software and Human Obsolescence,” in On the Verge of Photography: Imaging beyond Representation, ed. Daniel Rubinstein, Johnny Golding, and Andy Fisher (Birmingham: Article Press, 2013), 56–57.


view of landscape observation: not necessarily as a scene that is already an image, but a multisensory sphere in which photography takes part, and a realm where photographs can be ‘found’.

An obvious parallel to gathering is collecting, and they share similar features. Both aim to take items from their usual surroundings and store them in a particular, separate space. Unlike collecting, gathering as an activity doesn’t always produce a collection of things and objects that are meant to be cherished and saved; rather their storage is temporary. Their function is to be consumed and circulated further. Images online are subject to re-inscription and reuse. They appear online for others to be picked up and used again.

The Collector

In a passage in his *Arcades Project*, Walter Benjamin referred to the activity of collecting and the figure of the collector. The dwelling place, the interior, allows for an experience of a private world where the commodities transformed into collectibles are summoned:

> The collector is the true resident of the interior. He makes his concern the transfiguration of things. To him falls the Sisyphean task of divesting things of their commodity character by taking possession of them. But he bestows on them only connoisseur value, rather than use value. The collector dreams his way not only into a distant or bygone world but also into a better one – one in which, to be sure, human beings are no better provided with what they need than in the everyday world, but in which things are freed from the drudgery of being useful.

The gathering of photographs in an everyday setting is different. Once objects enter a collection, they are not in use, but refer only to others in the series that forms the collections. This is one of the factors that differentiate the acts of everyday photography from archiving and collecting. If the collector-connoisseur of Benjamin is “freeing” objects of their use value, then archiving gives objects (photographs) a preserved status. Archiving, prompted by epistemological needs, ties collected objects to their provenance and systems of the archive, but the archived objects are hence freed from their origins as commodities and usable.
FORAGING THE EVERYDAY

objects. What the gatherer does is not collecting or archiving and doesn't release photographs from their use value or status as items of consumption. In this respect everyday photography can be seen as a form of berry-picking: the images are gathered; they are items of use.

Photographs on social media sites are in a constant flow and are not destined to be looked at in the future. Their primary function is in the here-and-now of the everyday. Exceptions arise on some occasions. For example, people re-share old images on Facebook in an act of reminiscing about past events. Also, to consider someone's Instagram page as a grid and view it as a personal archive that can be looked at as a whole and accessed from any point of time, alludes to permanence. Still, even in the latter case, scrolling down an Instagram account through the layers of days, weeks and months, is eventually quite tedious. It is more accurate to state that a fleeting existence of images is the organising principle of many social media applications such as Snapchat, where images disappear within seconds, or Instagram stories that stay up for 24 hours, as do also Facebook stories since 2017.\(^\text{341}\) It is then also worthwhile to consider the act of deletion an inherent part of photographic practice.\(^\text{342}\)

Another figure travelling across texts on urban modernity is the rag-picker.\(^\text{343}\) Sontag connects the photographer, particularly in relation to surrealism, to the rag-picker.\(^\text{344}\) In the words of Sontag, “The Surrealist ragpicker’s acuity was directed to finding beautiful what other people found ugly or without interest and relevance – bric-a-brac, naïve or pop objects, urban debris”.\(^\text{345}\) The act of gathering is also different from rag-picking. If the rag-picker is collecting discarded objects and scraps that can be used in the future, but retain their link to a past use, or if the rag-picker as photographer sees beauty in rubbish, then photography as berry-picking is collecting fresh produce, something that is there to be collected but which is not old. The photographer-gatherer does not make collages, or redefine the old, but takes photographs in a straightforward fashion.

Benjamin’s collector maintains, via the collected objects, his ties to the past, while also envisioning a better future. The gatherer, in turn, is practical and lives

\(^{341}\) Casey Newton, “Facebook Launches Stories to Complete Its All-out Assault on Snapchat,” The Verge, 28 March 2017, https://www.theverge.com/2017/3/28/15081398/facebook-stories-snapchat-camera-direct. This kind of sharing was also tested on Twitter but did not take off. Ilya Brown, “Goodbye, Fleets,” Twitter Blog (blog), 14 July 2021, https://blog.twitter.com/en_us/topics/product/2021/goodbye-fleets. These modifications suggest it is not images but acting photographically that has importance. Will we have archives of these personal images, and to what extent do we need them? This is related to the way photography can be seen as a form of speaking.


\(^{344}\) Sontag, On Photography, 78.

\(^{345}\) Sontag, On Photography, 79. Zoe Leonard’s work has been also compared to that of a rag-picker, see McDonough, “The Archivist of Urban Waste.”
in the present. In their writing on photography’s indexicality, David Green and Joanna Lowry note two planes of temporality of a photograph: “one bound into an ever-receding past, the other occupying the horizon of a continual present.”346 The latter temporal mode would be more fitting to describe the ground of everyday digital photographs, which lies not in an ability to refer to a past; instead, the images construct a continuous present.

Habit

I discussed in Chapter One that serial photography is associated with ordering and is seen together with practices of putting things in order: archiving, mapping, categorising, collecting and classifying. On digital platforms, this order is fleeting since the uses of everyday images are often not permanent. In his short essay “Unpacking my Library”, Walter Benjamin expressed, as a collector, the dynamics between the chaos of his collection, and the “habit” that puts order on it: “For what else is this collection but a disorder to which habit has accommodated itself to such an extent that it can appear as order?”347 Collecting is a habit that creates, if not order itself, at least an illusion of order. For Benjamin, the library of the collector represents a chaos, and its “counterpart –is the order of its catalogue”.348 In terms of everyday acts, this is understanding collecting as activity, a habit that creates an appearance or sense of order in something that continues to exist as chaotic, confusing and confused.

In relation to everyday photography, the word ‘habit’ may have the meaning, according to dictionary definitions, of a settled manner of behaviour, and in another sense, a “manner of conducting oneself, bearing”.349 The word habit refers to something that one performs on a regular basis, and as such is an apt way to describe repetitive activity such as serial photography. Moreover, this habit of doing something marks one’s comportment. I discussed the term comportment earlier in the thesis as a concept brought up by Blake Stimson in relation to Bernd and Hilla Becher’s work. A comportment, an attitude or an attunement was legible in Zoe Leonard’s Analogue; similarly, a personal comportment is present in the more habitual activity discussed here. Through repetition, we show a position in relation to and as an attachment to something out there. Photographing serially is claiming one’s position through an iterative activity.

In the aesthetics of art, habit may be understood as an opposition to modern aspirations of new and unexpected. As Aron Vinegar writes, habits are:

346 They note how even though Roland Barthes stressed the past tense of photographs, even his approach was not so straightforward, as in Barthes’ writing there was also a paradox of a photograph referring to a past but existing in the present. Green and Lowry, “From Presence to the Performatif,” 57.
348 Benjamin, Unpacking my library, 62.
[…] often negatively associated with continuity, stability, and the repetition of previous forms of behavior, and thus often seen as an impediment to the modernist desire for change, flexibility, heightened sensory response, and new ways of being.\textsuperscript{350}

As such, habit could be seen as opposing art and creativity, at least if an understanding of art relies on the invention of something new. On the other hand, habit provides stability. Articulated by Vinegar: “Thus, another definition of habit might characterize it as the active immanence of the past in the body that informs present actions in an efficacious, orienting, and regulating manner.”\textsuperscript{351} Serial photography, if considered through the concept of a habit, could be then seen as a means of acquiring a certain composure through iteration, one that allows a confident interaction with the environment. A serial act is creating a stable and even solid structure against which to reflect life. So that serial expression can be viewed as a habit constructing endurance and stability, not necessarily an ‘order’.

Habits can be understood as acts that don’t require much attention. They are perhaps formed out of necessity, serve a purpose, many happen almost automatically.\textsuperscript{352} The obvious question that rises from treating photography as a habit is if it really can be described as a habit. After all, the kind of everyday photography discussed here is aesthetic in the sense that it aims to step outside the daily flow through a photographic observation. However, I treat habit here as a repetitive act that forms part of everyday routines and is intertwined with them. In addition, serial photography is treated as something that is simultaneously a habit embedded in the ordinary and action striving for the extraordinary. Making an artwork may include habits, and here I focus on what kind of nuances are embedded in this repetitive act that oscillates between on the one hand, the semi-automatic and on the other, the contemplative awareness of a landscape.

As an example of habit as a routine of an individual I discuss Christina Holmlund’s project.\textsuperscript{353} Her habit of going for a walk with a dog and taking a photograph at the same spot each day provides here an insight into seriality as an artistic method that can exist both as mundane activity as well as in the realm of contemporary art. The repetitive photographic series embodies both the fleeting and temporary nature of photographs of the everyday and their more lasting manifestation as material objects of art.

\textsuperscript{351} Aron Vinegar, “Habit”.
\textsuperscript{352} On everyday movement in environments and its nearly automatic nature, see geographer David Seamon’s work such as David Seamon, “Body-Subject, Time-Space Routines, and Place-Ballets,” in The Human Experience of Space and Place, ed. Anne Buttimer and David Seamon (London: Croom Helm, 1980), 148–65.
\textsuperscript{353} The following is based on an email and a semi-structured research interview on her work, e-mail May 24, 2021 and discussion on May 25, 2021. I have translated her quotes from Finnish. Her practice is illustrated in figures 8, 9, 11, and 12.
Figure 8  Christina Holmlund: $N60^\circ09'2\ E24^\circ56'1$', a selection of photographs, 2017.
Christina Holmlund is an artist based in Helsinki. Her work includes experimenting with photography, materials, video, sound, performance and text as well as making use of pataphysical methods in her art. An important part of Holmlund’s practice is her collaborative work within the artists’ collective Kunst, a group of female artists who actively organise multidisciplinary exhibitions and performances with a focus on contemporary environmental and social issues.

Like many artists, Holmlund has a presence on social media that hovers back and forth between the personal and professional. The series of sea horizons shot during eight years is partly personal everyday photographs, shared online with friends and acquaintances, partly artistic work meant to be edited and put on public display. I came across this photographic activity because she is a colleague and for a while, I was teaching at the same art school as her. Hence, I was part of the circle of people who have access to her private Facebook account. Her photography here represents an instance of how the same photographs exist across contexts and are embedded in daily life. Read further, her photographic project illuminates how the habit of serial photography creates continuity and a shared social space.

From 2011 to 2019, Holmlund took a photograph almost every day at the same spot, of a horizon, on a daily walk with her dog. She took the images with a phone camera since at the beginning she wasn’t sure what the project was, or if the matter at hand even was a project. The choice of smart phone became one which brought many a technical problem along the way, but on the other hand allowed for the instant distribution of each image. Her recursive act resulted in some 2,500 images, an archive from which she has exhibited a selection of mixed media prints as well as a moving image work, *N 60°09´2 E 24°56´1*. The video consists of 418 photographs from the collection which are animated with sound.

Programmed documenting of each day is an established form, a modality most known from minimalism and conceptual art. The daily work of artist On Kawara was discussed at the beginning of this thesis. The artist Roman Opalka documented each day of his life through painting numbers and taking a daily photograph of himself from 1972 until his death in 2011. In the present day, this somewhat rigid mode of art making has also become a familiar method in popular...
photo sharing. Quickly reviewed, it doesn't present an unexpected gesture that would renew making art. Habit, as Flusser describes it, is in opposition to new and unexpected which is fundamental to art. As such, this mode of art making has become habitual in the way Flusser claims all art is bound to be rendered eventually. This notion frames Holmlund’s project habitual in two ways: both as a modality in art, an established, known form of serial documentation, as well as a daily habit that exists as part of her everyday life.

Despite, or because of, its habituation within the institution of art, daily photography remains a powerful tool of inquiry, a method that can be applied in different settings, resulting in different kinds of artwork. In addition, it presents a method for experience, an intertwining of daily routines of everyday life with an act of photography. This is an experience that can be affectively shared with other people. In Holmlund’s photographs, the light changes from day to day; the sea moves, it’s frozen and then free; the sky turns from blue to purple to grey, and, during winter, pitch black. These photographs embody simultaneously both the cyclical and linear modes of repetition; forms that are outlined by the philosopher Henri Lefebvre. For Lefebvre, the former represents natural cycles such as seasons and circadian rhythms. The latter refers to “the repetitive gestures of work and consumption”. For Lefebvre, the linear repetition is imposed on the cyclical as a monotonous form: “In modern life, the repetitive gestures tend to mask and to crush the cycles”. This is Lefebvre’s critique towards how, for instance, working life leaves little space for individual agency.

If looked at through the prism of work, a repetitious mundane structure of actions may present a compliant or oppressed position. At least, many jobs operate that way. A dull repetition of labour is closely tied to how, since the beginning of industrialism and modern times, time is regulated through work schedules rather than natural rhythms, and more recently increasingly through an expectation to be available 24/7. In her writing on the exhibition A Day’s Work, Margaret Iversen discusses this relationship between natural phenomena and technological processes, and how this relationship is worked out in specific artistic pieces. These artworks are “diagramming the day”, translating natural cyclical time into rigid

361 A discussion on seriality of art practices and popular photo sharing can be read in Walker Rettberg, Seeing Ourselves Through Technology, 33-44.
365 I am thinking that in the present day, a stable and uneventful working life may be luxurious since working people are constantly exposed to unwanted change, and working life seems increasingly precarious rather than stable.
presentations such as the conceptual artist KP Brehmer’s *Himmelfarben (Sky Colours)*, 1969–76 in which he painted the changing colour of the sky for 24 hours, each hour jotted down in a different colour on millimetre paper as well as Inge Dick’s *sommer licht weiß 2013/54*, 2013, a composite photograph tracking the different tones of daylight throughout the day.\(^{368}\)

Elsewhere, Iversen notes a difference between an index and a diagram: the latter represents an abstraction of existing phenomena (such as weather).\(^{369}\) Photographs may operate on both ends; they are indexical as they have, in the words of Iversen; “a close, causal or tactile connection with the object it signifies.”\(^{370}\) On the other hand, like a diagram, they present a picture plane, a surface displaying colours and shapes. Holmlund’s photography is not abstracted in this way, but it presents figurative, straight presentations of what was in front of the camera. Her work then moves between these two. They are pictures of a sea view with a small island and they present the systematic jotting down of days through taking a photograph of them, almost automatically mapping for example the colours of the sky; grey, grey, grey, a ray of light in grey, reminiscent of a diagram. These moments in mornings are documented with a smart phone camera, which is a technical device that seems to be an integral part of our embodied being. In effect, this activity illuminates how an everyday experience of natural cycles and landscapes is subject to constant shaping and contouring through a mobile phone, an activity that has an almost regulating and reconfiguring effect imposed on what is essentially a multisensory experience. Equally oscillating in Holmlund’s daily life were the photographic acts and taking the dog for walk. The dog needed a walk, and in order to be motivated to do it, she started taking a photograph. Once photography started to feel like a chore, the dog needing a walk pressed her to go on.

Although the string of acts is repetitive, each photograph presents a pause amidst the average pace of tasks and responsibilities. Holmlund recounts an almost meditative experience that she had when taking a photograph. While her dog was sniffing around, she would stand and look at the horizon, breathe deeply a few times, and take the photograph. The combination of both flow and pause is a dynamic embedded in daily life providing both a breather from the daily pace as well as a parallel routine of its own. In this way her serial activity is resisting the daily repetitive order and simultaneously rewriting this order with the persistency of its own repetition. Her photography works in relation to, both resisting as well as negotiating, the material conditions of the everyday. She took the photograph every day – after all, a dog has to be taken out daily – but she did not want to constrict herself to certain times. If she had to go to her teaching work, the walk would take place earlier. If it was a day off, or a weekend, she would walk later. And it may be

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\(^{368}\) Iversen, “Diagramming the Day,” 61, 71.


\(^{370}\) Iversen, “Index, Diagram”.
vital to use a repetitious, work-like act to first of all pay attention to the shifting of the larger cycles, as well as to find and track the variation in the monotonous.

Mundane repetitive structures may also have other significance. Chores may bring comfort and stability. The literary scholar and critic Rita Felski in her addressing of everyday life sees temporality and spatiality intertwined. At the heart of the everyday for her are repetition, home and habit. Her take is that habit marks the experience of the everyday, while repetition expresses the temporal, and home the spatial dimensions of the everyday. In this, Felski notes that repetition is viewed often in the scholarly writing on the everyday as something negative; for example as a subordination to prevailing conditions, as opposed to resistance, which has been associated with innovation. Despite this, repetition is first of all necessary as, according to Felski, “repetition is not simply a sign of human subordination to external forces but also one of the ways individuals engage with and respond to their environment.” Repetition could then, in addition to stability, be a means to come to terms with unpleasant phenomena, as well as to respond to existing circumstances in an individual way. Moreover, daily habits are not simply semi-automatic actions without meaning outside their immediate purposes. Says Felski:

[...] habit is not something we can ever hope to transcend. Rather, it constitutes an essential part of our embeddedness in everyday life and our existence as social beings. For example, the contemporary city may constitute a chaotic labyrinth of infinite possibilities, yet in our daily travels we often choose to carve out a familiar path, managing space and time by tracing out the same route again and again. Furthermore, habit is not opposed to individuality but intermeshed with it; our identity is formed out of a distinctive blend of behavioral and emotional patterns, repeated over time.

Serial, repetitious photography would, as a daily habit, mark one’s position, express one’s individuality. However, I am not sure if in an experiential setting, photographing would become a habit on its own, but most likely it functions as supplementary to many other habits a person might have.

Insistence

Watching Holmlund’s edited video, I am astonished just how different a view can be. Yet this may be stating the obvious. We all know that the light shifts, seasons and weather change. But do we really know? Do we really take notice? It is a task for photography of an insistent nature to reveal and show such effects. Insistence

371 Felski, Doing Time, 81.
372 Felski, Doing Time, 81.
373 Felski, Doing Time, 84.
374 Felski, Doing Time, 91.
as an opposing mode to repetition is brought up in the twentieth century author Gertrude Stein’s work. Even though the photographs present a repetitive act, none of these acts are fully repeating themselves. According to Stein, a frog doesn’t jump the same length each time. This thought is similar to Heraclitus’ famous quote on one not being able to step into the same river twice. Stein used repetition as her writing method. In the lecture “Portraits and Repetition”, she recounts her personal history; how she listened to her eleven aunts repeat to each other the same stories (they had to be told repeatedly as there was always someone who didn’t hear at first). This is when she realised how repetition was not possible. In Stein’s words:

> Then we have insistence insistence that in its emphasis can never be repeating, because insistence is always alive and if it is alive it is never saying anything in the same way because emphasis can never be the same not even when it is most the same that is when it has been taught.

When a person writes, they insist rather than repeat, as a different emphasis comes into play with each iteration. The art historian Jennifer Dyer discusses the artist Andy Warhol’s work in terms of repetition and difference. She notes how Warhol’s repetitive images of mundane objects such as Campbell’s soup cans articulate a difference through each iteration. While the depicted object is the same, “the structure of Warhol’s series is a structure of repeated differentiations”. This is because as Warhol’s silk screen images are hand printed, there are bound to be differences between them, slippages and accidents.

In terms of photography, we may see images being different from each other because of the way taking photographs is situated in circumstances that are not easily predictable. Each day is different. Also, chance plays a part in what is captured in a daily photograph: a bird, a sailing boat, an exceptional cloud, a rainbow. In addition, the person who photographs is sensitive to the changes outside them as well as inner mental flows, making their mind-set, and hence photography, different each day. Insistence is created through the way each photograph will have a different emphasis in the series. This emphasis is formed through photography’s ability to arrest chance encounters, but equally through the photographer’s contingent comportment. As an insistence, serial photography could be understood as an act of underlining; pointing the same again and again to spell out what the photographer

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Figure 9  Christina Holmlund: N60°09′2 E24°56′1, a selection of photographs, 2018.
is seeing. Once this happens again and again, it doesn't necessarily require that much attention: in other words, it becomes a habit.\footnote{For an artistic exploration of photography as a habit, see \textit{In the Year 2021 / Orders} in the appendix of this thesis.}

There is something captivating in the persistency of Holmlund’s photography that has such a mass behind it. The photography produces a time-lapse that is at the same time automated and embodied, both rigid and subject to errors and chances. What is a romantic, expressive and contemplative impression of the scene is combined with the automated performance of the repetitious act. Whenever a vast amount of photographs are presented, they seem to be a product of a machine, with a machine-like, precise aesthetic. The presentation is here nevertheless imprecise, since the image is never framed from the exact same point. What could be a webcam or time-lapse with ‘proper’ equipment precision, is in this case a sequence riddled with imperfections that reveal a human body taking the images.

It is a complicated matter as to whether an image connotes a human presence through certain technical imperfections, since those effects – underexposure, movement blur, a crooked horizon – can be produced with the help of the same machines that can be used to avoid them. In fact, Holmlund\footnote{Discussion with C. H., May 25, 2021.} tells me that she stumbled to the problem of aligning images while animating them into a moving image because they would not overlap each other neatly since she had, of course, never been in the \textit{exact} same spot (even though she roughly knew where she would stand). Besides, she didn’t even have the same camera for all those years, a fact that serves to illustrate how material conditions play a part in daily photography. Since the animation would become jumpy as a result of the images being just slightly off from each other, she added \textit{more} noise, more jumps and incoherence, to create an effect.

Holmlund’s series is essentially grounded in artistic practice. However, the series had in addition a life of its own on social media when she started posting the images on her feed. She did this more or less on a daily basis during the eight years. First, she posted only occasionally, gradually more frequently and eventually every day. In the beginning she would post a photograph “like one puts photographs on social media as in ‘wow, a great view’”,\footnote{Discussion with C. H., May 25, 2021.} and later on in a more structured manner. This parallel life of her images appearing on social media brought some other dimensions to her project. Her photographs would then also exist outside the art world.

In our discussion we talked about what is the difference between her as an artist and her as just a person with a dog. Holmlund raised the point that although she was aware of herself being a person with a dog, she at the same time maintained an idea of herself as an artist. She noted that the repetitive structure of her photography was not “obsessive”. Instead, she had knowledge
and understanding of performance and conceptual art and would associate her work with those traditions.  

An opposing view to Holmlund’s human scale shaky horizon might be Majakanvahti’s posts (@majakanvahti), who is a professional photographer as well, posting images on Instagram from a high-rise in Helsinki. The tower building that is the locus of his photography is relatively new, one of the few buildings with more than 10 floors in Helsinki, with a panoramic view both eastbound to the suburbs and westward to the city centre. With special permission, Majakanvahti has access to the roof of the building, although some of the images he takes from a window in his apartment. In a newspaper interview he describes his process:

> The idea of the blog is that if I see something interesting from Majakka, I try to capture it in a great photograph. I am a photo quality nerd. The image has to be sharpest of the sharpest for me to bother publishing it.

The photographs are meticulously produced with advanced photographic equipment. They depict extraordinary sunsets and clouds, topographical views of the city, the sea horizon all the way to Tallinn and so on. I must admit my own jealousy at times when he has managed to capture the moon. I try to take images of the moon from my own windows, but it is seldom I can see it from there. (Fig. 10) Indeed, along this line, a reader’s comment brings up a view that I think is very enlightening. While these high rises dominate the everyday scene of many residents of Helsinki, most of us do not have access to view the scenes that open up from them. In the same way as in Holmlund’s project, the images by @majakanvahti position the photographer at a stable point from which they show a view to other people. The difference is that while Holmlund’s photographs could be taken by practically anyone, the views presented by @majakanvahti are only accessible via his images, since the location in the height of 134 meters is exclusive. Holmlund is not reaching faraway lands and putting herself in danger. As her photographic action on social media started to take a regular pace, often the same people would discuss the photographs. A loose group was developed, something she calls a “small following”. The photographs seemed to be essentially comforting for some, she says, drawing from messages she got. It seems that Holmlund’s posts

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382 When we talked about this, I came to think of the differences of a structured act like hers and other daily photography. While for example someone photographing from their window might take the same view, what they essentially are looking for are differences; not the repetitive image of sameness, but something extraordinary in the ordinary which is the view from the window. This kind of photography will be discussed in the next chapter.

383 Marjaana Varmavuori, “Janne Hirvonen saa erikoisluvalla kiivetä Kalasataman tornitalon katolle, sillä se on hänen harrastuksensa – 134 metristä hän ottaa kuvia, jollaisia ei ole ennen nähty,” Helsingin Sanomat Digital, 11.6.2020 2:00


created stability for these followers, a stability that would bring comfort. In this case it was not simply that the images were beautiful (because most of them are), or interesting in showing something different each day (as they did) or providing an experience of following a row of photos of grey days, and then seeing the sun suddenly appearing. It was due to the fact that viewers knew she was taking the photographs. Each photograph would present a proof that she had gotten up, walked to the shore, and taken an image. I ask her if she thinks that people felt she was doing this for them as substitute experience. She doesn't think it was that, but rather people having the knowledge and imagining her getting up, walking to the shore, the weather being what it was, and taking a photograph. The knowledge and trust in this action happening would bring comfort and a sense of continuity.

In a follow-up to this, she says people started to form a narrative, imagining her as an almost heroic figure, always making her way. The image of Holmlund as a heroic photographer walking to the seashore presents an echo of a reasonably common understanding of the photographer as a loner who observes the world. However, unlike the photographs of a documentarist who faces dangers whilst accessing places and events beyond reach for general audience, she presents images from an accessible and common view, created through technology that is available for many. The mundane photographer is heroic only in her persistence and endurance of the dull everyday. Each morning, rain or shine, be there a beautiful sunrise or a pitch-black December morning, she gets up, goes to the shore and takes a picture.

The way her images were perceived was not because of an awe of her skill but of the wonders of nature as well as in what a photograph can show. “Can a sky really be this magenta?”, she cites a conversation on her feed. Awe like this is reminiscent of the nineteenth century sentiments around the invention of photography. In his writing on photographic collaboration, Daniel Palmer describes these early perceptions with the words “Nature as author. Sun as collaborator,” referring to an understanding of photographs as products of nature and mechanical objectivity, rather than of an individual author. While this understanding of photographic authorship is anachronistic, it nevertheless opens a sphere where authorship is opened to include the viewers of the images. I am not suggesting that Holmlund's work was collaboration – it wasn't. However, the collaborative can be understood in a more extended sense as conversing about photographs. This also underlines how photographs as well as how they are being looked at typically take many different forms. This is perhaps what many images embody; on the other hand

386 The persistent myth of a lone photographer is raised for example by Daniel Palmer. It manifested for example in the reception of the introverted hobbyist Vivian Maier, as well as in the figure of the photojournalist. Holmlund's practice, however, does not rely on either of these myths; the self-made, isolated, undiscovered - then discovered genius of Maier, or the heroic press photographer. Daniel Palmer, Photography and Collaboration: From Conceptual Art to Crowdsourcing (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003103684, 2.
Figure 10  The moon from my window, excerpt from Orders / In the Year 2021, colour photographs by the author.
appearing in a more traditional context like fine art. Looking at a scene together through photographs opens the meaning making and a sense of place to all participants.

**Here and there, the deictic positioning and photographic space**

The spatial intimacy that arises from looking at photographs together could be understood through the use of a present tense, the gesturing of the photographer and the deictic arrangement of photography. The use of the present tense refers to the certain continuity of serial photographs. As said earlier, shared photographs on social media tend to, at least for most part, express the present tense, and create an open-ended and moving flow of images. In Holmlund’s project, too, as it appeared online, the sensation of the photographs was in the here-and-now. Who would go through yesterday’s photos? Instead, a focus on the present day at hand or an anticipation of the next day would be more accurate experiences.

The deixis in photography refers to photography’s indexicality. Margaret Iversen, drawing from Mary Anne Doane’s writing, explains the two forms of the index. The index is a trace (like a footprint), but it is also a pointer: deixis. Photographs are deictic, because they are indexical. Photographs are always pointing. In linguistics, the word ‘here’ is a deictic expression, a word that will get a meaning when it is tied to a time and place. *Here* cannot refer to anything without a context defined. On the other hand, this makes deictic expressions able to shift in meaning. A photograph, because of its indexicality, is deictic. This means that, although it is not entirely empty of a fixed meaning, a photograph is to be defined by a context. But a photograph also refers to a specific time and place, to the point when it was taken. To talk about photography as an act is to acknowledge that a photographic image also carries with it the act of photographing. *Here* cannot then exist without someone, a positioned body, defining that ‘here’.

Thierry de Duve describes an affective response to ‘the photograph’, rather than a reading of it, which he claims to be an area for semiotics.

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388 Of course, a collaborative angle can be also taken in relation to art objects.
390 Green and Lowry, “From Presence to the Performative,” 2003 as well as Iversen, *Photography, Trace and Trauma*, note how Roland Barthes expressed this, pointing out: “The photograph is never anything but an antiphon of ‘Look,’ ‘See,’ ‘Here it is’; it points a finger at a certain vis-à-vis, and cannot escape this pure deictic language.” Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 5.
391 Green and Lowry, “From Presence to the Performative”.
Figure 11  Christina Holmlund: N60°09´2 E24°56´1, a selection of photographs, 2019.
The word *here*, used to describe the kind of space embodied in the snapshot, does not simply refer to the photograph as an object, a thing endowed with empirical measurements that we are holding, *here*, in our hands. Because the photograph is the result of an indexical transfer, a graft off of natural space, it operates as a kind of ostensive gesture, as when we point with the index finger at an object, to indicate that it is this one, *here*, that we mean. In a sense, the very activity of finding a ‘focal point’ – that is, selecting one particular plane out of the entire array of the world spread in depth before us – is itself a kind of pointing, a selection of this cut through the world at this point, *here*, as the one with which to fill the indexical sign.393

In de Duve's text, *here* is referring both to the act of taking a photograph, pointing to an event, and the photograph as an object, which a viewer is able to physically handle. In relation to a space and a person photographing it, *here* could also be understood as a rootedness to a place and a body.

In their addressing of the deictic and photography, the writers David Green and Joanna Lowry note that the present tense is what C. S. Peirce uses in his writing on the index. In Peirce's words:

> […] an index is essentially an affair of here and now, its office being to bring the thought to a particular experience, or series of experiences connected by dynamical relations. A meaning is the associations of a word with images, its dream exciting power. An index has nothing to do with meanings; it has to bring the hearer to share the experience of the speaker by *showing* what he is talking about. The words *this* and *that* are indicative words. They apply to different things every time they occur.394

I think that by the present tense is here meant how the meaning of a deictic expression happens always in a context, but that this context is temporally located in the here-and-now of each situation.

What is then the meaning of deixis in relation to the sharing of photographs? Illustrative of this might be the note made by writer Jordan Troeller, writing on an installation by the artist Zoe Leonard. *You See I am Here After All* is a collection of vintage postcards of Niagara Falls. This is an installation of 3,851 old postcards that were printed from 1900 onwards and brought together by the artist in an exhibition space. Niagara Falls is a traditional tourist site, reproduced in a multitude of ways during the last 150 years.395 Because it is packed with souvenir kiosks and restaurants obstructing the view, the Falls can be only experienced as an unaltered natural phenomenon through certain viewing points and is often

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393 de Duve, “Time Exposure”.
experienced only through its multiple reproductions. In Troeller’s view, the title *You see I am Here After All*, “shifts away from the index as pointing to the absent object and points, instead, to the absent *subjects* who take up those speaking (or spoken-to) positions”\(^\text{396}\). The play on deictic words like you, I and here move the pointer to the viewer. While the deictic meanings shift, the photograph as a visual (material or immaterial) object, becomes a crossing point for many pointers; acts of the photographer and the viewer (*I* and *you*), different locations (*here* and *there*).

The affective response to Holmlund’s photographs could be understood through the concept of mediated presence, according to which a photograph’s relationship to the past is not central to its meaning. A photograph rather communicates and carries a presence in the here-and-now. Here, the distance between the viewer and the photographer (or the photograph) is not temporal, but spatial\(^\text{397}\). On the other hand, taking a picture of a place and sharing it with others has been noted in research on visual mobile communication as something that can express a joint or side-by-side view\(^\text{398}\). I perceive this as a certain spatial intimacy, despite a possible physical distance.

Mobile communication is often instant, and as such this kind of looking at the same photograph together is fleeting. However, if such shared looking takes place daily, will there be a mutual mental space that has continuity and stability? The presence of Holmlund’s audience on social media reveals another side of habit; the habit of looking at what she has photographed on a particular or any morning. This looking also had pragmatic measures: some of her friends used her photographs to check what the weather was like that day, and her sister used them to check if she was alive and well. This habit of looking takes part in the photographer’s habit, and in repeating and living a common habit, a mutual experience starts to form. Deictic words shift in meaning, a centre whose meaning can move from one to another, depending on situation. I am wondering whether, then, on the temporally fleeting, unstable platforms of social media, a mutual habit of looking at images could form a shared space, a space where *I* am *here* could be extended into a *you are here with me*? An understanding of place is outlined by ethnographer Sarah Pink as something that combines physical localities as well as different digital platforms and technologies\(^\text{399}\). It is in this ground that the repetitious act of photography creates a particular, shared place. Not only the spatiality, but the temporality of such photography could be then understood differently, not in the

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\(^{397}\) As discussed by Mikko Villi, see Mikko Villi, “‘Hey, I’m Here Right Now’: Camera Phone Photographs and Mediated Presence,” *Photographies* 8, no. 1 (2 January 2015): 3–22, https://doi.org/10.1080/17540763.2014.968937.

\(^{398}\) See Villi, “Hey”.

past-present line, or even a linear progression, but as lateral, shared continuation in which the repetitive act of photographing is echoed by the habit of the viewer.

In addition, Holmlund’s photography was a two-way interaction between her duties and photography. What this act shows is how a photographic act can be deeply embedded in the daily life. It would be inaccurate to say that photographing didn’t aim at least for some kind of presentation of reality (whether actual, visible reality or an inner reality) and preservation. The project illustrates how photographic acts of looking and taking photographs as well as the images this act produces propose another take on the old paradox of the photograph Thierry de Duve presented in his essay “Time Exposure and the Snapshot” \[400\] The problem for photography is that for both snapshots and time-exposures, continuous movement of life cannot be captured: like de Duve says: “reality is not made of singular events”.\[401\] The paradox of the photograph is that while capturing life in its flow (snapshot), it freezes it and “returns it as death”. A photographic sequence can present a narrative. But even a photographic series does not overcome this problem. However, the act of photography can emulate life or be imbedded in the flow of everyday life. These acts that form continuity may present another take on photography’s realism: as a day-to-day stable habit, in addition to merely capturing moments in visual representations. Rather than figuring out if and how images can represent the real, we should approach photographic acts (joined with the images they produce) in terms of how they are part of the real and how they take part in the multiple daily acts that construct our everyday.

In repetition, Holmlund’s project provided a structure for experiencing everyday life, but also made the experience visible and graspable: in habituation the project created a space where a sense of familiarity, stability and continuity would arise. Although one may understand such practice as simply repetitious, echoing the dullness of day-to-day life, the sharing and social aspects transcend this habit from its material grounds.

Going back to the hunter-gatherers this chapter started with: In the recent research the importance of pre-historic female hunters has emerged, and the narrative of the gendered division between hunters and gatherers has started to erode. I want to make the point that even in this narrative, more importance is placed on the spectacular acts of hunting, than the understated act of gathering (or even hunting small animals) that remains subdued. What the recent studies may help to is to dismantle and acknowledge their co-existence and equal importance. In the same way that hunting and gathering, the heightened and the mundane, exist in tandem, so it is in everyday photography, the captured moment is a decisive moment equally important as the repetitious, the same that is nevertheless a variation.

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400 de Duve, “Time Exposure”.
401 de Duve, “Time Exposure”.
Figure 12  Christina Holmlund: N60°09´2 E24°56´1, The last photograph 31.10.19.
5. AFFECTIVE EVERYDAY ACTS

Leena Hägglund’s view from the window, photography and preservation

Anyone involved in foraging mushrooms or berries knows that preservation is a key element in the chain of gathering food. Photographic acts as gathering result in preserving: the images are preserved to be consumed later. There is also a way in which everyday photography plays a part in the preservation of one’s immediate environment. Preservation is also a way to describe the way everyday photography maintains one’s relationship to the immediate environment and the social sphere. Secondly, photographs, through showing everyday scenes and action, put everyday aesthetics forward. My question is how photographing is part of the everyday, not (only) a representation of it or an exploration into it.

The routinised gesture of taking the smart phone in our hand, swiping it, tapping on the camera icon, raising the phone/camera, pointing it towards something, and tapping again to make a photographic exposure is a series of acts embedded in the life of many. It is repeated several times, often during one day, and to view it as extraordinary, which is traditionally constative of an aesthetic experience,402 is complicated. In turn, to think about photography as an integral part of everyday experience and as an everyday act in itself, will be first of all more accurate in describing the current practices of photography, and secondly opens up some new considerations on what kind of purposes and further activities are invoked by taking photographs. Another reason to discuss photography under everyday aesthetics is that everyday experiences are formative in how one relates to the world.403 This means that everyday images and aesthetic experiences have an effect on what is noteworthy; for example on what is being considered valuable and worth preserving in an everyday environment.

I start this chapter by introducing photography by Leena Hägglund, who took photographs from her window for many years, and shared them on a public social media platform. She started to take photographs after retiring from care work, when she moved to a new neighbourhood some ten years ago. Photography was a way to take in the new living environment and learning to move around it. Hägglund describes as having time on her hands, because she is retired and this is one of the reasons she takes photographs, mostly of plants and nature as her motives.404 Her photographs depict her houseplants, or views from the window in

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402 Saito brings up how stand-out experiences are more likely to get attention as aesthetic than the inconspicuous. Saito, Everyday Aesthetics, 48.
403 Suggested by Saito, Everyday Aesthetics, 12.
404 Phone conversation with Leena Hägglund November 5, 2020.
her kitchen. The scene from the kitchen is important, because this is where she often sits, looks out and sees what is happening around: the changing weather as well as animals like birds, foxes and hares that enter the scene.

I came across her photographs midway through this research, because we share the same residential area and the photographs were published on the local Facebook group. I did not know her before, and her photographs resonated with the question I was dealing with: how does serial photography unfold in daily life? The photographs appeared to me in the pace of my daily life, an iterative event that brightened my day. My personal response as a viewer was a reason to include her photographs in my research, and I approached her because I was interested in what she thought about taking photographs.

In the following I interpret the views she expressed during a discussion we had at a local café in October 2021, as much as my own reaction to the images. The way she uses photography to interact with her everyday surroundings is at the centre of the writing, and I then go on to extend and speculate on how photographic acts could be approached in relation to affective acts such as touching as well as more practical everyday activities like laundry. Further examination focuses on comparing photography to homemaking and preservation, and the consequences this might have for understanding everyday photographic acts as part of maintaining and caring.

Hägglund’s photographs present views that she has photographed from approximately the same location. The seasons and weathers change in the images. They have been taken under varying lighting conditions, and they often display night scenes like moonlight, as well as sunsets, beautiful cloud formations, weather conditions like snow or rain and other wonders of nature. Each photograph is published with a text, in the manner of a title for the photograph, which highlights what is visible in the image, for example “a rainy day”, and is often supplemented with an emoji.

I treat her practice here as an everyday activity, but it is also important to pay attention to the way it has aesthetic goals, and how beauty and interest in the scene are motivations to photograph. Publishing photographs online is a common activity, and her photographs both represent such activity and stand out as original.

The curator of photography Clément Chéroux has paid attention to how so-called vernacular photographs are not subject to categorising when they appear in their normal context. He says:

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405 Phone conversation with L. H., November 5, 2020, research discussion with Leena Hägglund October 6, 2021.
406 “I often sit by the kitchen window, it’s where I do whatever, fill in crosswords and such”, she says. Research discussion with L. H., October 6, 2021. I have translated her quotes from Finnish.
407 The discussion was loosely based on a set of questions that I had sent beforehand. Her practice is illustrated in figures 13, 14, and 16, which present a small selection of her photographs.
Utilitarian, domestic, or popular images become vernacular only when they leave their original milieu and begin to be considered by artists or art professionals. It is only when vernacular imagery enters the cultural sphere that it becomes the Other of art. And that is precisely where we find the complexity of the problem: photography is vernacular only insofar as it holds up a mirror to art.408

This is the paradox that I need to face here: by taking up a ‘vernacular’ example and discussing it in relation to art there is a risk of othering that practice. As noted at the beginning of this thesis, as soon as something is picked up as an object of research, it becomes that. This is not dissimilar to what Saito points out in relation to everyday acts and art practice: once a mundane act is framed as art, it loses its everydayness. But is it ever possible to discuss photographs in their original context? I suggest that, when photography takes place in the everyday it does not need to be discussed along the categories of ‘amateur’, ‘vernacular’, or ‘artistic’. Instead, I write from my own experience on the photographs in order to stay within the context I encountered them.

Communicating, gesturing and touching

Even though digital images are seen as migrating, algorithm directed, always latching on to other images, mostly in a random way (such as an Instagram feed that appears as a mish mash of randomly selected images409), they also relate to each other in meaningful ways, directed by human subjects. Hägglund's photographs were commented on and sometimes responded to with another photograph of the same subject. She describes these images as not the same but similar; for example a tree in autumn might get as a response a picture of another tree from the viewer’s own yard.410 This means that the images do relate to other images but not in a random way.

The researcher Annebella Pollen, in her writing on amateur photographs of sunsets, notes that in amateur photographs the subject matter that repeats itself only indicates what is important to people.411 Moreover, this repetition is not actually repeating the same. She says, “Sunset photographs may all look the same, but the meaning changes in each one”.412 The repetition within certain type of photographs, Pollen suggests, could be a case of antanaclasis, a linguistic form that has been connected to photography by Victor Burgin. The term describes a situation when the same word has two entirely different meanings in a sentence.413 This understanding of photographic repetition would suggest that photographs

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408 Chéroux and Lillis, Since 1839, 141.
409 At least they seem random but are of course algorithm-directed.
410 Discussion with L.H., October 6, 2021.
412 Pollen, “When is a Cliché Not a Cliché?” 80.
explicated by different people could be forming a certain chain of different ‘sounds’, all similar but different at the same time. While this communication can be perceived as superficial on linguistic level, a “visual chit-chat”, or as phatic, its affective power is something that should not be ignored.

In recent writing, photography has been accessed as language and conversation between people, and as a form of human sociability. Communicating on social media relies on not only showing something, but expecting a response, marking, according to Daniel Palmer, “a shift, from photographs as a record to a prompt”. The researcher and artist Michelle Henning makes a note on the understanding of this speech as affective:

Nevertheless, the speech-like aspect of social media photography also ties the pleasure in images to the pleasures of sociability, with the anticipation of a response and the enjoyment of looking, making and composing images keeping us ‘posting’ and ‘sharing’. The sensual, attractive aspect of images becomes conflated with an emotional quality that belongs not to the photograph itself but to the interaction.

Photographic acts are then not so much linguistic acts, nor do they need to be necessarily looked at through the representational qualities of producing original pictures. Instead, they resemble actions and sensations that precede language. For instance, the act of grooming is a predecessor of language. Grooming, the stroking and nit-picking of fur among primates, does not only have the purpose of cleaning, but is part of animal communication; social signalling between individuals. As an inherent part of animal behaviour, it belongs to the ordinary activities of animals. Grooming is reciprocal, in that one expects something in turn; in the same way, posting photographs and getting reactions are reciprocal. Transmitting a photograph is a form of stroking; physically stroking the screen to send images, and stroking in a more ephemeral sense, in sending a signal. It is a series of tactile acts that have the ability to create bonds between people.

414 See for example Henning’s notes on chit-chat and phatic photographic language, which are generally viewed in a negative light. Henning, “That Liking Feeling,” 229.

415 An outline of this view is provided by Henning: “digital, networked photography as chatter suggest that photography can absorb and transmit nuances of communication that are primarily expressive and emotional, despite its historical claim to objectivity. Both see photography, used on a mass scale, as a technical mediator of human sociability.” Michelle Henning, Feeling Photos, Photography, Picture Language and Mood Capture, in Photography off the Scale: Technologies and Theories of the Mass Image, ed. Tomáš Dvořák and Jussi Parikka, Technicities (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021).


418 This also concerns many other animals.

Both taking images and looking at them requires a haptic interaction with the image capturing device, as well as the screen that brings them into view. Even when images themselves are not manually graspable, like in digital surroundings, the act of looking with the eye can be a form of touching. From a body’s standpoint, from inside towards out, looking resembles touching. In the same way as when touching hands or fingers move, feeling their way, the eyes are not static but in constant motion. They are kind of palpating their way in a space, establishing three-dimensional objects and spaces. The relationship between photographs and touching, is discussed for instance by Margaret Olin in her book *Touching Photographs*. She notes that photographs were always used for people to “stay in touch” with loved ones. Touching can be then understood here as a metaphor for gestures between people that are both tactile and visual. In Olin’s words, “Yet photographic gestures indicate that photographic practices do more than merely represent the world. Gestures turn photographs into presences that populate the world like people and act within it to connect people”.

Photographs may indicate caring between people. Equally, taking a photograph can be viewed as an appreciative act, caring for the environment. Everyday activities such as cleaning or gardening can be understood as ways to care for our immediate environment. Domestic chores are not merely about making things pretty and pleasant; rather they establish interaction with the surroundings. Everyday photography fits this way of caressing the environment. As acts, cleaning and gardening are visual in the sense that they transform a view through making something tidy or bringing beautiful plants into sight, but they are also haptic in the way they are acted upon physically, with or without technical aides, and made with the co-operation of hand and eye. In the same way, photography belongs to both vision and touch.

**Connecting**

I became aware of her photographs ‘gradually then suddenly’, as is the case with anything that happens over time in the flow of daily life. I am a member of a local social media group for the area where I live. The group’s posts consist of local notices, lost and found adverts, sometimes adverts from local companies and residents’ observations, both written and pictorial. Sometimes a heated conversation pops up, more often not. Even though these social media groups may

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420 In her book *The Skin of Film*, Laura U. Marks describes haptic visuality, in which “the eyes themselves function as organs of touch”. In her view, haptic visuality is different from optic visuality as it perceives the surface of things, rather than diving into depths, illusions offered by the image. She says: “It is more inclined to move than to focus, more inclined to graze than to gaze”. Marks goes on to discuss haptic images which invite the viewer to look at them haptically. In these images it is not immediately clear what they depict. I think that to an extent, all images and things are looked at haptically, as the viewer moves their eyes over the picture’s surface. *Laura U. Marks, The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 162.


also provide a ground for negative behaviour, my intuition is that communication remains mostly positive, and they play a pragmatic role.

What can be read from the landscape photographs in the group is a certain awe about what the local area looks like – and how it looks in photographs – as well as a shared affective look at ‘our’ parks, ‘our’ own area and its beautiful views. The appreciation for the environment could be described with the word ‘topophilia’, a feeling which, as the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan outlines, “includes all of the human being’s affective ties with the material environment”. These ties may take many forms, visual or tactile, and I think taking photographs presents an important form of relating to the environment. Landscape aesthetics, as pointed out by Saito, has also been historically a means to promote nationalist purposes. The admiration of a local landscape is not necessarily exclusive to others, and there is no institutional interest involved. Social media mediates the daily surroundings in such a way that they can be shared in an affective way and thus serves to involve people in participation. They are spaces where, for instance, town planning issues are brought up and discussed by residents, and where local activism gets its roots from.

The photographs that members share appear sporadically and either point to an issue or present mostly pleasant landscape images of the area’s greenery, with a beautiful sunset appearing on many of them. These images could be described most often as something that can be called a ‘photo-opportunity’: a particularly heightened moment in a sphere of observations that make up quotidian experience. These pictures are often composed in such a way that puts what is being observed in the foreground. Quite often, these are composed horizontally, following the traditions of picturing that have resulted in a ‘portrait’, a vertical format, and a ‘landscape’, a horizontal format. At other times, images are composed vertically. The categories of ‘portrait’ and ‘landscape’ format are, however, not much followed in quotidian photography since camera phones are held vertically by default and turning them to horizontal format is a conscious decision, accentuating perhaps a more refined composition than pointing the camera at whichever object one wants to capture on the screen. The square format of Instagram publishing feels like a compromise between the two.

Against the appearance of these photographs, but also to an extent along and conforming to their aesthetic, there were certain vertical images I started to pay attention to. Suddenly I realised that under my everyday scrolling, there was a person taking photographs (supposedly) from her window of the daily life that happened outside it. There were also some posts taken around the area, just quick

424 Saito, Aesthetics of the Familiar, 145.
425 Yi-Fu Tuan makes a distinction between “local and imperial” patriotism in loving one’s environment. Tuan, Topophilia, 101.
426 The square was also the format of Kodak Brownie camera, the ‘original’ device for snapping.
Tälläista pilveä taivaalla 🌇
This kind of clouds on the sky
4.4.2021

Pumpulitaivas ⛅
Cotton ball sky
15.2.2021

Talvisen illan maisema, puut huurteisina ❄
View of a wintery evening, frosty trees
17.1.2021

Auringon laskua 🌅
Sunset
13.10.2020
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Mitkä upeat taivaanpilvet just nyt
What gorgeous clouds in the sky right now
23.10.2019

Kuu piilottelee 😊
The moon is hiding
10.10.2019

Kaunis Juhannus aaton yötaivas 😍
A beautiful night sky on Midsummer Eve
21.6.2019

Mikä lie jälkensä jättänyt 😍
Something left its traces
16.5.2019

Figure 13 photographs from the window, Leena Hägglund, 2019-2021.
remarks on a tree with bright red leaves in autumn sun, a traffic sign that had
fallen, graffiti on a brick wall of a transformer on the street corner.

Soon I started to wait for them. Part of this had to do with the excitement of
taking her work as part of my research, and in relation to this I felt the satisfaction
of a collector who detects yet another piece for her flock of collectibles. In the
same way I experienced collecting, for example, planes through photographing,
I experienced the same joy of being able to add another piece to a collection, a
piece similar to others but unique in its own existence.427 Another part of my
happiness was the affective reaction that I would experience each time I saw one
of her photographs. It was the knowledge that she was out there somewhere in
her home getting pleasure from what she sees and from taking photos, and that I
would share this same pleasure through my own perceptions.

This pleasure of mine was manifold. It was the joy of looking at her images as
well as pleasure in the recognition of the same daily phenomena and the drive to
take photographs of them. For example, on the day she posted an image of a thin
layer of snow that had appeared overnight in the record warm winter, I felt an
affinity to her look, as I had the same morning glanced out of my kitchen window
and noticed the same. This resulted in an affective act of sharing an experience of
looking, in which the photograph she shared served as a marker or an object to
which this experience was attached.

**Seriality**

When I observed these images through an image search, the photographs formed
a series. They were all taken from approximately the same place. In some of
them the same view was recognisable, while in some photographs the framing
was a little different. The images were thus not uniform, but nevertheless, seen
together, they had a resemblance to an intentional, repetitive photographic series
so familiar from contemporary art. The intentionality, and the way they were
consciously shared on a regular basis, strengthened this effect, and my interest
in the photographs was saturated with the notion that a form known from
contemporary art could find such a mundane explication and context. Having
the camera device, observing, taking it out, pressing the shutter and sharing it
with others seemed to be for her an everyday activity – perhaps not a daily one
but frequent enough to be called iterative.

As it turns out, the photographs seen as a series for me as a viewer and on the
other hand the serial photography for their author unfold a little differently. While
I would perceive what I saw as reminiscing a set photographic series was for Leena
Hägglund serial action evoked more by material circumstances than an intention
to create a series. The act of looking and the act of taking the photographs, on the
other hand, both present a certain stasis that is tied to repetitious photography.

427 See Plane Collection in this thesis.
This stasis manifests itself in both viewing and taking photographs, the former approaches a series of images as ready, the latter an everyday world in its potential from a grounded viewpoint. On a social media platform an image series is usually ongoing, always presenting new items to look at, and in this way collides with the experience of the photographer. In the case of something appearing in succession, over a long period of time, it is the recognition of something previous, and anticipation of the recursive, that has the power to arrest interest.

Stasis

It is, then, the seriality of these images that in its persistence and focus manages to make a dent in the algorithm dominated image flow. Repetition has an ability to cut through the somewhat jumpy and flickering feed of daily photographs. Hägglund’s ongoing sequence was pinning down an image that would stand out in the multitude of messages shared daily. As said, in the same group there are other people who post images, quite often of beautiful sunsets, or landscape images of the nearby forest. But although heightened moments, they fail to stop the motion of the scroll. They remain in the realm of the fleeting and are easily forgotten. Social media feeds, within their ordinariness, are also constructed of multiple daily efforts at the extraordinary: each image tries to stand out with a visual clue. As they quite often, despite efforts for a “good photograph”,428 end up being similar to each other, they do not arrest the attention for very long.429 In this context, the dullness of repetitive photographs interjects the flow with a sense of stasis.

Photographic seriality presents a case that falls in between the temporalities of stillness and movement, simultaneously satisfying a static look at the same thing as well as a desire to see more images. Even though the serial encompasses both the pausing and the flow, in focusing on the same view, it belongs more to the dynamics of stasis, since it presents, if not the same image, at least the same idea for an image. This stasis is read in framing, the position of the photographer. The focus on one thing may be to spell out, insist, repeat, in order to create a pause in the flow.

In recent photography research, the concentration on singular images and their meaning has shifted to an understanding of photographic images as fluid, travelling through contexts and meanings. In these discussions, as noted by Michelle Henning, the pictorial plane appears to be only a surface, covering the data working behind it.430 As a consequence, Henning says, “The end of the single and singular image seems to announce the irrelevance of approaches that treat the image as representation as well as of practices of close reading.”431 The kind of

428 See Pollen, “When Is a Cliché Not a Cliché?” 77.
429 There appear to be two modes of ‘same’ here, one the literally same view, the other an aesthetic style and motive that repeats itself across pictures by different people.
430 Henning, “Image Flow”.
take on photographs for semiotic and aesthetic analysis is based on the mutual pausing of the photographer, an individual who looks at a photograph, as well as a photograph itself as a frozen piece of time. As noted by Michelle Henning, “Close reading of an individual image could be described as a synchronic slicing of time, an artificial pause for the purposes of analysis.”\(^{432}\) However, according to Henning, the division into pre-digital images that “may be attended to individually and semiotically, and digital networked images that (it is claimed) should not be” can be challenged.\(^ {433}\)

Despite the mass nature of images, as individual viewers, we also experience images individually.\(^ {434}\) On a digital platform, photographs are tied to a temporality, where a sequence of images is presented to us one by one. In his writing on photographs Victor Burgin, addressed in 1982 the case of one and the many. According to him, there is something in photographs themselves that does not evoke a long look.\(^ {435}\) In Burgin’s words, “It is therefore not an arbitrary fact that photographs are deployed so that we need not look at them for long, and so that, almost invariably, another photograph is always already in position to receive the displaced look”.\(^ {436}\) This appears to be particularly true of photographs online. We look at images one by one, paying some attention to a photograph, then moving on to the next.

In the flow that threatens the singularity and close looking of images, it is perhaps paradoxically seriality, many images following each other, that presents a pausing, a deictic situating of oneself, a pausing in the here-and-now, focusing on one single view. For Burgin, a look becomes “displaced” when the viewer stays with one single image too long, and thus loses a sense of relation and command to what they view. The viewer realises that the look actually belongs to the camera.\(^ {437}\) He says, “The image now no longer receives our look, reassuring us of our founding centrality, it rather, as it were, avoids our gaze”.\(^ {438}\) I suggest that as the experience of looking at a (still) image becomes repeated, this will each time reaffirm ‘our look’, helping to suture the experience into an identification with what is being looked at.

Moreover, the pausing draws attention to the stasis of the photographing subject, and it is perhaps here that a chance for close reading and reflection offers itself for the viewer. As said earlier, the way digital images appear online is as if

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\(^{433}\) Henning, “Image Flow,” 134. In a more recent article, Henning writes on close reading of social media images, and while they are conceived as literal or emotional, close reading is still needed: “But a close reading helps to reveal how the picture participates in a larger culture without necessarily being the result of a coherent set of intentions.” Henning “That Liking Feeling,” 237.


\(^{435}\) David Campany talks about this in his analysis of Jeff Wall’s work, see Campany, Jeff Wall, 8–9, as does Henning, “Image Flow,” 134.


\(^{437}\) Burgin, “Photography, Phantasy,” 191.

\(^{438}\) Burgin, “Photography, Phantasy,” 191.
without origins, in shifting contexts with malleable metadata. While this may be, most of the images that circulate are taken by someone with an intent. The flow and abundance of images is then not as chaotic as it seems. A serial act of a person is pointing to one individual, a conscious subject. As suggested in Chapters Two and Four, repetition can be seen as being conditioned by a subjective comportment, and it is this comportment that also becomes legible in the flow of social media images.

The viewer’s perspective on this pausing could be explained through the way the writer and researcher David Campany has written on the meaning of a photobook amidst the flow, or abundance, of photographs presented to us daily. Even though the photographs I am discussing do not appear printed and fixed in a book, I nevertheless think the following quote has relevance here to how serial photography functions within the daily stream of events. Campany writes:

> If there is a mainstream, it is that mutating flow in which the order of images experienced daily is more likely to be determined by the algorithms of ideology, preference, taste, and commerce than by a conscious mind, let alone a creative or critical one. When any image might relate vaguely to any other, the very gesture of locking down a sequence in print, once and for all, which almost any photobook demands, can seem like a small act of resistance.

The assertion Campany makes has importance to how I experienced Hägglund’s images. A photobook is an opportunity to stabilise photographs, put them in a sequence and most of all, make the selection material. Since photographs in the book have found a rooted, material ground from which they are not easily lifted, images in a social media feed might feel like a remote point of comparison, supposing that printed matter has stronger longevity than the fleeting images that flock into our daily experience. However, even though her images do not appear in a book, and are perhaps not even meant to stay, they nevertheless present this kind of small act of resistance to what we normally see.

The abundance of images online is often understood through movement of images. I suggest that iteration of photographs has the ability to create a pausing within this action of skipping from one photograph to another. In iteration, as Jennifer Dyer formulates in relation to modern art, “the result of each stage in a series is a basis of the next stage”. The viewer experiences an unfolding repetition of photographs as iteration where each image is understood in relation to the antecedent image. Iteration is constructing a meaningful coherence of

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439 Comportment as a term originating from Blake Stimson’s writing.
440 Campany, “What Does Photo Editing Look Like?”
442 Dyer discusses the modern artists Degas, Egon Schiele, Mondrian, Francis Bacon and Andy Warhol and how seriality is part of their work.
Ordering the Everyday

Ordering the Everyday

photographs. This is not necessarily narrative, but simply an understanding that parts of a series follow each other. To see photographic series, in a book or an exhibition space, is often to see many images at the same time, inviting a comparison between them and to see a whole. A series online has a potential to be experienced in real time, in the same rhythm with the photographer’s movements. Iteration creates an experience of a whole, not because the images can be taken in simultaneously, but through an understanding of the previous image and anticipation of the next. And anticipation is essentially a static experience. What I suggest is that repetition, a monotonous movement, belongs rather to the temporality of pausing and stasis. This pausing poses a chance to reflect for the viewer.

Talking to Hägglund, it turns out her repetition was not entirely out of choice. When she moved to the area after retiring from care work, she would go for long walks in the parks and forests and take photographs as she went along. These photographs were a way to take in the new scenery, to get familiar with different paths and locations, and she would then, once back home, refer to these images. She would also photograph at local events. The repetition that I experienced and interpret through my interest in photographic seriality came simply because it is by the kitchen table where she spends much of her time. It is like in her photographs the repetition did not reside in the photographic series, they were not meant to be one, but rather the seriality makes explicit a certain repetitive structuring of a restricted position. From this position, when one is subject to an even more monotonous texture of the everyday than more abled or younger people, photographing the same view is not about choice but finite possibilities.

Her act was then serial, not because it aimed to produce a photographic series, but because it happened in the flow of the everyday, as a series of acts, reflecting the very structure of the everyday: repetitious and boring, at the same time open to chance and events. If repetition and dullness of each day are indeed qualities of daily life, then her photography enacts and reflects this repetition. On the other hand, it provides an opposing act to this by the enhancement of small happenings such as shifts in light or movement of clouds and placing attention to them.

It is important to note that all of Hägglund’s images have a title or a caption. She told me when we met that the title is what she thinks up even before taking a picture. “The text comes first, like what I am thinking, and then only I take the picture” she says. I think this underlines the singularity of each photograph: they are certain thoughts and reflections, or moods, of a specific moment or day, which she expresses through the act of photographing. The heightened moments then become simultaneously part of the repetitive structure as well as enhancements or small ruptures to its patterns, much like Christina Holmlund’s photographs of the seashore introduced in the previous chapter.

444 Discussion with L.H., October 6, 2021.
445 Discussion with L.H., October 6, 2021.
Sataa, sataa ropisee syksy on 🌧️🍁🍂
Rain, rain, it’s autumn
8.9.2020

Jokohan sakea sumu alkaa laantua ⛅
auringon myötä 🌅
I wonder if the thick fog will clear when
the sun shines
18.11.2019

Tänään harmaata harmaampi päivä 😊
Today, greyer than grey.
19.2.2019

Hui, huikean oloinen taivas yllämme.
Wow, immense looking sky above us
12.9.2018

Figure 14 photographs from the window, Leena Hägglund, 2018–2020.
In our discussion, Hägglund described that taking photographs and sharing her photographs gives joy, and “interest” to daily life. I interpret this as giving shape to experience that might otherwise be experienced as a repetition of the same. She says:

It brings joy… and how should I say this… You have a feeling of belonging to something when you photograph something. You don’t feel yourself so lonely. And when you can share it with someone else, it’s a feeling that someone else is present in a way through that.446

She describes a sense of belonging which is brought through the act of taking a photograph as well as getting a response. This marks a specific moment amidst the everyday, but which nevertheless as an occurrence that can be repeated is part of serial action. Serial photography is a kind of activity that expresses one as positioned in one’s surroundings; sharing adds another dimension to it. Another feature that has the ability to provide a pause for the viewer is the affective power her photographs have, which I perceive to be related to the tangible subjective position.

Home and street, part II

The experience of photographing is often entwined with the experience of moving in space. While serial photography may express movement as described in Chapter Two, serial photography can also be looked at through pausing, as suggested here. The previous chapters have dealt with an everyday attitude that gets its inspiration from and is located in familiar surroundings of the photographer.

A home has been an inherent idea in these cases, yet all of them move outside from home. I interpret Hägglund’s grounding or anchoring in her photography as not simply because of a social interaction and a response from other people, but I read it through home as an individual expression of a position as well as photographic action as part of maintaining that home: expressing a solid position in relation to other people as well as to the immediate surroundings.

The neighbourhood where we live is suburban. As noted earlier, the separation into the private, domestic everyday and the public everyday has a historical rooting. However, the distinct spaces of the home and the street are not mutually exclusive, nor are the distinctions into public and private photography. Even though the city street has in the discussions of the modern become a mostly public space, an understanding of the street as also adjacent to residential buildings would open the intermixing of public and private. The experience of the suburban and residential sphere is mostly lived and central to people of old age, the unemployed, children and youth, as well as stay-at-home parents, since these people often spend more

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446 Discussion with L. H. October 6, 2021.
time at home and in their local area than working people. Residential areas can be understood as spaces where the home/kitchen and the landscape of streets and parks co-exist in the daily shifting between the two. Not only private, but not purely public either, the residential space is a space where they overlap.

The literary critic and theorist Naomi Schor has outlined two separate approaches to the everyday, one concentrating on domestic setups, another on the public sphere. The street as a public space and home as a private space is thus a division that also manifests itself in the discussions on the everyday. In Schor’s words:

According to the one, the everyday is made up of the countless repetitive gestures and small practices that fall under heading of what the existentialists called the contingent. According to the other, the everyday is made up of the chance encounters of the streets; its hero is not the housewife but the flâneur 447

What Schor describes here is not only everyday space divided into private and public, domestic and the street, but also an understanding of temporality that is entwined with their distinction. These two temporal modalities belong to both an understanding of the everyday and photography. The serial, daily photography that I am discussing could be associated with a repetitive structuring and ‘small practices’ like housework, while photography that aims for visions composed into singular, compelling images would represent the ‘chance encounters’ on the street. In addition, Saito notes two temporal approaches to history:

[…] the great man theory of history which constructs a narrative out of what is usually regarded as the movers and shakers of history, such as kings, emperors, and generals, and landmark events, such as battles, the birth of a nation, and the promulgation of a law. For many of us, this is the kind of narrative we recognize and are taught as history. This approach of weaving a historical account by concentrating only on the mountain peaks, however, tends to ignore the valleys and foothills that support and give rise to mountain tops. So the alternative approach, often provided to supplement the great man account of history, is to focus instead on things like material culture, vernacular history, and common folks’ lives. 448

This has consequences on what is considered worth looking at and worth talking about. Saito writes about “eclipsing the ordinary.” 449 For instance, “landscape” is often understood as picturesque mountains instead of mundane scenery such as “our yard, the streets around us, a shopping mall with a huge parking lot around it,

448 Saito, Everyday Aesthetics, 48.
449 Saito, Everyday Aesthetics, 49.
office buildings facing concrete pavement”. But, according to Saito, “it is equally important to illuminate those dimensions of our everyday aesthetic life that normally do not lead to a memorable, standout, pleasurable aesthetic experience in their normal experiential context”. Mundane landscape as a subject matter for contemporary photography is an established trope. What is of interest here is how photography, as an experiential practice of looking and taking photographs, is part of the said “normal experiential context”.

The genre of street photography gained popularity through the work of Henri Cartier-Bresson and his contemporaries from the 1930s onwards, but the connections between photography, the urban everyday and movement originate from much earlier. The invention of the handheld camera in 1888 took place in line with urbanisation and was a modern way of exploring the rapidly expanding urban space as well as transcribing an urban experience. The connections between the everyday and the street are well-discussed in theories of the everyday of the twentieth century. And the tradition of street photography explores the everyday life on the street.

The hustle and bustle of the city is an experience removed from that in a residential area. So is the rhythm of life different from someone briskly walking the city streets. The nineteenth century flâneur was leisurely, had the privilege of walking around and observing. Leisurely strolling hardly describes the movement of the average contemporary adult, who is constantly on their way to work, to hobbies and leisure activities, to meet people, to shop, to take care of duties.

Many of our photographic acts take place during these kinds of strolls. One hardly stops for a long time when taking a photograph with a smartphone. It is not conspicuous in any way, because it is so common, and it is often done along with quotidian walking, which, as described by researcher Sanna Lehtinen, “usually involves some clear purposes and practical goals to be attained. Quick

450 Saito, Everyday Aesthetics, 49.
451 Saito, Everyday Aesthetics, 51.
452 Bate, Photography, 142.
454 The street or the urban space is a locus for the everyday for Lefebvre, de Certeau, and Maurice Blanchot. See for example Schor, “Cartes Postales,” 188, or Felski, Doing Time, 86.
455 In his writing Meir Wigoder focuses on an “anonymous pedestrian, who is a crucial figure in theories of everyday life because he/she performs the role of the anti-hero, who remains nameless, becoming just a number in the crowds”. When philosopher Maurice Blanchot called the street the only place where the everyday can be located, he was referring to an experience of anonymity. An understanding of anonymity and a neutral narrator is central to Wigoder’s analysis of Israeli artist Daniel Perlov’s serial photography of a street from his window. Wigoder describes this being: “to capture his subjects from a reflective, impersonal, and serial sensibility”. While Wigoder concentrates on the figure of the anonymous pedestrian, he forgoes Perlov’s own view hardly being anonymous as in his large body of films, titled Diary, he also turned the camera on his own home and family life. Besides, anonymity, or speaking in the third person, cannot provide ‘objectivity’ or ‘neutrality’, and therefore cannot begin to describe ‘anyone’s’ experience. Meir Wigoder, “Some Thoughts about Street Photography and the Everyday,” History of Photography 25, no. 4 (December 2001): 368–78.
decision making and prioritising determine the chosen routes and the overall attitude towards the phenomena that are encountered.”

Unlike for a person of leisure or a street photographer, who approaches the street from an outsider’s point of view, much everyday photography takes place in the kind of situations where action is initially directed towards something else; on journeys to work, school, shop. For this kind of photography, standing still takes a hasty form; a quick pausing replaces thorough contemplation. Contemplating in front of a landscape is a luxury not everyone can afford. Leisurely photography tends to be reserved for artists and devoted hobbyists.

No one has as much time on their hands as an elderly, retired person who does not go out every day, but spends a lot of time in their home. This confinement is because as one grows old, no matter how active a life one has led, one will eventually lose some of one’s energy. While a retired person may have leisurely time, they tend to spend more time at home than, for example, a younger person might. Looking out from the window, the highlight of the week is a hare or a fox, or a string of school children walking in a line on their way to an excursion.

The view from the window and balcony

In twentieth century writing on the everyday, a view from the window is described as an entry to everyday life but one that does not necessarily express it. Henri Lefebvre describes the balcony, or in the lack of it a window, as a place where one can situate oneself “simultaneously inside and outside” in order to take in: hear and see a rhythm of everyday, urban life. Michel de Certeau begins his *Practice of Everyday Life* with a chapter on walking in the city with a description of a view from the World Trade Centre in New York. He makes a clear distinction between the experience of a city as a panoramic picture and as a space for practitioners who walk and “make use of spaces that cannot be seen”. However, for someone not walking the city streets, a window may present a prominent sphere of experiential practice. The view from the window represents a chance to respond to the everyday scenery from home. The window marks a border space between the private and public, but this border is not fixed but is in constant process, and one can equally turn to look at the outside world as well as the inside of a home. A window, then, does not only present a readily framed view that can be turned into an image, a case of mere optics; it may present a view with rich possibilities for observations and sensations, therefore also part of an embodied experience.

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457 However, Lefebvre adds that this window should not “overlook a sombre corner or a gloomy internal courtyard”. Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time, and Everyday Life* (London: Continuum, 2004), 28.
459 Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 1, 93.
Rita Felski writes how, “everyday life is usually distinguished by an absence of boundaries and thus a lack of clear spatial differentiation.”460 She notes that the everyday is made up of varied spaces such as the workplace, the office and the home as well as a virtual knowledge of places brought through technology. Written at the very beginning of the twenty-first century, online digital space is not mentioned but clearly belongs to this category. As discussed in the previous chapter, a place can equally consist of physical locations and digital spaces, and although I will not be able to discuss this in more detail, I want to bring up that digital space can be understood as an extension of home so that the concepts between private and public become even more convoluted, not only marked by an actual window but also by a computer or mobile phone screen.

However, despite the ambient nature of everyday locations, home can be seen as “the privileged symbol” of everyday life,461 and it is home that I turn to. Felski describes home in relation to the ways a subject experiences the world:

Like everyday life itself, home constitutes a base, a taken-for-granted grounding, which allows us to make forays into other worlds. It is central to the anthropomorphic organization of space in everyday life; we experience space not according to the distanced gaze of the cartographer, but in circles of increasing proximity or distance from the experiencing self.462

The pausing discussed earlier expressed a positioning to a physical location at a home. I interpret Hägglund’s photographs as indices of that location.463 The more photographs taken from a window there are, the clearer becomes this connection of a certain home-based situatedness.

An enlightening description of domestic, vernacular photography from the balcony can be found in a piece written by the curator and researcher Mirjami Schuppert as she looks at the vast archive of a Finnish amateur photographer Helvi Ahonen who photographed her life from 1940s to 1980s.464 From this extensive archive of original negatives, which Ahonen had in her will donated to the Finnish Museum of Photography, a small, but distinct collection of photographs taken from the balcony of Ahonen’s home emerged.465 Schuppert asks if the moment of photographing was indeed more important than the photograph:

460 Felski, Doing Time, 85.
461 Felski, Doing Time, 85.
462 Felski, Doing Time, 85.
463 The photographer’s location and act are always indexically embedded in the photograph, at least from an anthropocentric viewpoint.
465 This was a side-product, or a sidenote of the work Schuppert did with Ahonen’s archive as a curatorial project and part of her PhD work.
Was the moment the photograph was taken more important than the photograph itself when the print was picked up from the photography shop perhaps weeks later? Did the birds on the balcony ever find their way to the photo album next to the family portraits?466

This question is at the heart of the matter: is simply the act of noticing and taking up the camera equally or more enjoyable than looking at photographs afterwards, or even showing them to others? After all, many of the photographs are deleted, remain not shared or are stocked in the confines of data storage. While an answer is probably far from straightforward, and after all it is not possible to separate these entirely, there is significance in the act of photography itself and what this experience produces.

Figure 15  Sparrows on a balcony railing (Varpusia parvekkeen kaiteella) Helvi Ahonen, 1970s? Finnish Museum of Photography

Photography and domestic acts

Particularly in domestic work, the products of the work are most often short-lived and temporary. Laundry and cleaning do not produce lasting results. Whatever is accomplished through this work will erode and need redoing, constant iteration. The pleasures and meanings of everyday photography can be perhaps discussed through aligning them with other everyday activities, particularly in the realm of the domestic, as these are the ones that repeat themselves day-to-day but most importantly, they are ones that have been more or less “eclipsed by the ordinary”.

They belong to those aspects of everyday life that have not gained much consideration in the historical and theoretical narratives that focus on heightened moments. Everyday photography is then like domestic work in that its products don’t provide grand narratives or gestures and remain reasonably invisible in their ordinariness.

On the day we meet at a local café, Leena Hägglund tells me how she had looked at the clouds and how beautiful they had been on that morning, but she had decided not to photograph them: “I have so many photographs of clouds”. I ask her about the repetition, what is her view on it. Her answer is simple: “They [clouds] are just so beautiful so one needs to… somehow fragile,” and she adds, the clouds are always so different. It is almost like she could not help herself in front of the sight of the ever changing, beautiful clouds. I wonder if the clouds, in how they evoke sensations, call to be acted upon; taken in, stroked, preserved, in short: photographed.

It is clear that taking photographs for her does not present any drudgery that might be associated with usual everyday tasks, but I nevertheless bring up domestic activities into the discussion for the sake of finding out about the nature of photography as an everyday activity and how the embodied aspects of doing are joined by more ephemeral aesthetic pleasures. These are questions I have considered particularly in relation to my own practice and my own experience of taking photographs of daily phenomena. As I described in the preface of this thesis as well as later on in the latter part of Chapter Three, taking photographs is not only about ‘being creative’ but can be interwoven with daily tasks, or be in itself a task that requires actual, mundane activity such as handling the camera, lifting it up, and dealing with the images; adjusting, arranging, saving and deleting them.

Of the different household activities, doing laundry is one that has attracted specific interest in everyday aesthetics, and serves here as an example of such an everyday practice that can be aligned with everyday photography. Jessica Lee

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Saito, Everyday Aesthetics, 49.

Research discussion with L.H., October 6, 2021.

describes laundry as an activity that both evokes bodily sensations in relation to the environment and engages “the imagination and memory in appreciating that interaction”. She also notes that, “Laundry-hanging remains a routine practice with qualities of repetition, meaning-making, and aesthetic value”. Laundry, then, is a typical activity with both repetitive, mundane, and practical qualities as well as aesthetic dimensions and possibilities for meaning making.

Saito reflects between the practical and the aesthetic, noting that the aesthetic has been traditionally kept separate from being “subsumed under the practical” but, as she continues, this separation has been recently challenged. Saito sees it as noteworthy that:

[...]

aesthetic satisfaction is felt as one engages in an activity: laundering, vacuuming, farming. This mode of aesthetic experience does not fit the spectator-oriented mode of aesthetics even if we were to liken our activity to performing.

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470 Lee, “Home Life”.
471 Saito, Aesthetics of the Familiar, 119.
472 Saito, Aesthetics of the Familiar, 124.
These experiences do not stand out from the mundane flow. Saito calls for a model of aesthetic experience that is experienced “through one’s engagement with everyday tasks and that is thoroughly integrated into the mundane.” While photographs are objects or indices that are shared and shown to others, the actual use of the camera phone does not typically have an aspect of performing for someone else. Taking photographs with a mobile phone is ordinary, something that one does without necessarily paying attention to it. Photography can be a private pleasure: while we experience it as viewers, we also experience it as doers.

However, there is also an aesthetic dimension to laundry that exceeds the privacy of the homemaker’s experience. Domestic everyday acts have an internal side as well as significance to the outside world. Saito discusses how laundry hung on clothes lines outside the homes are on the one hand a subject for debate in some areas in the US, where drying clothes outside has been banned by housing associations. On the other hand, says Saito, clothes lines can be seen as a sign of life, something that indicates human presence. The clotheslines present onlookers with colourful displays as well as revealing a play of wind, shadows and light. Laundry, like other household chores, is then aesthetically rich, containing both practical efforts like keeping clean as well as complicated aesthetic dimensions. In the same way, everyday photography is not only a case of millions of sunsets, pictures repeating the same, but mark embodied activity embedded in the experience of the everyday. The aesthetic pleasure derives as much from looking at images as from the more practical everyday experiences involved with it.

Both laundry and everyday photography simultaneously have aesthetic goals as well as pragmatic ones. Practical purposes might be like I have described Hägglund’s photographs of a new space in learning to move in it, or, sharing images of plants in order to receive collective advice on their well-being – or simply the act of responding to one’s immediate sphere.

The more practical applications of photography often have the function of notetaking, but they also entail social and affective dynamics that do not derive from a photograph’s visual appearance but from more wholesome and multisensory properties such as recognising or sharing an experience. Photography’s meaning and aesthetic value is in addition to its pictorial effects, also in the experiential activities of taking photographs and liaising with one’s environment and other people through them. In social media in general, photographs are often used by the residents to point to found items. At least in the area where I live, people put up pictures of mittens, keys, et cetera, pointing to items on the ground that can in

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474 On a note on how taking photographs can become a spectacle, see the appendix and *In the Year 2020* in this thesis.
475 Saito, *Aesthetics of the Familiar*, 130.
this way find their owner. Lost and found photographs present direct acts of care for other people, and their aesthetic values coincide with ethical considerations.476

Preserving and maintaining

In her writing on house and home, the philosopher Iris Marion Young introduces the way Simone de Beauvoir brings up the division into immanent and transcendent existence. Housework, for de Beauvoir is immanent, its temporal dimension repetitive and cyclical, offering no future tense or creative possibilities, unlike transient projects, available for (with the supporting work of women) men and children as “particular contributions to the world of human affairs”.477 However, Young points to a distinction between housework that is merely instrumental (such as cleaning) and homemaking.

According to Young, homemaking is tied to preserving material objects.478 She says, “Preservation makes and remakes home as a support for personal identity without accumulation, certainty, or fixity”.479 Preservation of things “gives people a context for their lives, individuates, their histories, gives them items to use in making new projects, and makes them comfortable”.480 What is important is that these objects are maintained “in the context of life activity,” rather than as museum pieces.481 Family photographs are perhaps an obvious item like this. Photographs in family albums or even personal, digital galleries root a person to their history or life events as well to the people and places that are close to them.

Young addresses preserving the “meaningful identity of a household”482 as something that is simultaneously simple maintenance such as cleaning as well as more specific acts meant to “preserve particular meaning that these objects have in the lives of these particular people”.483 Like housework, preservation is repetitive. She illustrates this co-existing action accordingly:

The homemaker dusts the pieces in order to keep away the molds and dirts that might annoy her sinuses, but at the same time she keeps present to herself and those with whom she lives the moments in their lives or those of their forebears that the objects remember.484

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476 It is beyond this work to explore the aesthetics of care any further. It nevertheless opens up a potential enquiry into how photographs take part in caretaking. The relationship between ethics and aesthetics has been recently discussed by Yuriko Saito, Aesthetics of Care: Practice in Everyday Life (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022).
477 Young, “House and Home,” 137. See also Felski, Doing Time, 82.
478 Young, “House and Home,” 142.
479 Young, “House and Home,” 125.
480 Young, “House and Home,” 142.
481 Benjamin’s collector may exist in opposition to another existence that relies on the preservation of objects.
482 Young, “House and Home,” 143.
483 Young, “House and Home,” 143.
484 Young, “House and Home,” 143.
This kind of dual purpose of preserving may be a way to describe everyday photography from home. While it produces mementos and objects of aesthetic or informational value, like photographs that can be later reflected on, it is also embedded in the everyday as a practical maintenance and caring for one’s immediate view, social interaction and psychic pleasure. The simple photographing of the everyday can be understood as a preserving act. What is preserved is not objects as such, but home and the living environment itself.

In her discussion, Young extends the concept of home to communal spaces and “public acts of the group: maintaining collective spaces, guarding and caring for statues and monuments.” She situates this work in pre-modern and non-Western societies. In the residential, urban, Western area under examination here, preservation can be understood as maintaining a collective experience and appreciation of the daily living environment and its habits through photography. Likening photography to preservation and homemaking draws attention to the routinised, sometimes pragmatic, dimensions of photography while keeping its aesthetic values. These aesthetic experiences resemble the ones encountered through other everyday tasks and I maintain that the consequences are equally similar: they give shape to the everyday, help to maintain the environment, create social bonds, preserve a meaningful sphere of living and bring aesthetic pleasure that cannot be separated from the experience of everyday life.

Aesthetics of care

Through my own artistic projects, photographing the planes and going repeatedly to photograph the same spot, I was curious whether serial photography could be understood as an act similar to other daily tasks that take place systematically or in a more random manner: going to the bus stop, taking out the rubbish, brushing your teeth, cooking. As I have discussed in the last two chapters, habitual photography shares similarities with certain everyday acts such as homemaking and preservation or can appear in tandem with daily necessities such as walking the dog, but it is perhaps impossible to put them in direct comparison. The daily tasks are repeated because they need to be done, and despite the aesthetic pleasure one might experience through those tasks (such as laundry), the comparison to everyday photography might find its place in more sophisticated concepts like homemaking.

In my own experience, photography is often laborious, as when part of a ‘project’ it also becomes a task that needs to be done. Did I enjoy going to the same spot over and over again with a camera? Not very much, or at least not always. Most often, I was enthused over finding out what the photographs turned out to be – seeing the results of my work.

Young, “House and Home,” 145.
In all of the cases I have described, photography worked as a supplementary feature for daily activities. Serial photography allows much needed pauses or breathers, contemplations in the traditional sense of aesthetics, to daily life. On the other hand, photographic acts exist along and among mundane activities to an extent that we don’t always even pay close attention to the fact that we are taking photographs. Following these assertions, I propose photography to be essentially a supporting activity.

I am again drawn back to Lucia Moholy’s words, introduced in Chapter Two. “[…] who knows this world, who takes care of it? Who lives consciously in his surroundings?”486 The amateur who lives consciously in their surroundings, takes care of it. In her text, Moholy suggested that this conscious living and caretaking is also expressed and acted out with the help of photography. Objects that surround us bear use value, but they have a potential for an aesthetic value through photography. How these aesthetic values turn into acts of care, and how they relate to care ethics,487 can be approached through comparing photographic acts with so-called everyday acts.

I set out to explore an everyday attitude but am now wondering how the photographic activity I have described expresses a caring attitude. Repetitive photography could be described as an articulation of commitment, committing oneself to the situation at hand and to the object that is being observed. Aesthetics of care as well as theories of maintenance are directions that I would like to point to as possible consequences of serial acts, even though I can present them only as suggestive for further research.

### Maintenance

Another area that has only been hinted at in this work is the concept of maintenance. I believe that like care aesthetics, it has importance in relation to everyday photography. Maintenance as an object of study in several disciplines has gained significance in the recent years.488 Moreover, as Shannon Mattern suggests, maintenance is simultaneously a practice:

> To study maintenance is itself an act of maintenance. To fill in the gaps in this literature, to draw connections among different disciplines, is an act of repair or, simply, of taking care – connecting threads, mending holes, amplifying quiet voices.489

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486 Moholy, “der amateur bei sich zu hause”.
487 Saito, Aesthetics of Care.
489 Mattern, “Maintenance and Care”. 
Maintenance studies examine those areas that exist constantly and on the background. Much like housework and homemaking, maintaining acts enable grand narratives and make heightened experiences possible but remain themselves undervalued. Maintaining acts are serial, repetitive acts based on a situated position of the experiencing self. As described by Graham and Thrift: “[…] fault-finding and repair is a process of ongoing, situated inquiry.”490 Housework and preservation, in the way I have described in this last chapter, are one form of maintenance. They share repetitive structure and invisibility. In addition, Mattern acknowledges that understanding domestic and care work are important in accessing maintenance.491

Maintenance can point to different kinds of scales such as objects themselves or, for instance, certain circumstances.492 An important question about maintenance is that it does not only concern the object or a “thing”493 that is maintained, but also the “negotiated order that surrounds it.”494 Maintaining could then include acts that not only deal with material objects but more abstract phenomena and is thus also part of so-called restorative practices. What exactly does everyday photography maintain? I have proposed that it maintains at least social relations and appreciation for the immediate environment.

491 Mattern, “Maintenance and Care”.
492 Mattern, “Maintenance and Care”.
494 They continue: “through disagreement over causes, through to complex theorizing, responses which are often the result of long and complex apprenticeships and other means of teaching (Henke, 2000; Suchman, 1987),” suggesting these repetitive acts are combined with more advanced knowing and thinking. Graham and Thrift “Out of Order,” 4.
CONCLUSION

Subjective and shared view

To photograph on the top of the mountain one must climb it; to photograph the fighting one must get to the front; to photograph in the home one must be invited inside.495

Peter Galassi

In this work, I have approached the different ways seriality expresses itself in photographic endeavours that take place in what can be called 'the everyday': The movement of the documenting photographer, the grid as it appears on digital platforms and is accessed through googling, seriality as an expression of habit, and photography as it unfolds as serial in response to one's lived experience. I have viewed serial photography as an expression of a subjective position and of being sensitive and attentive to one's surroundings. In my discussions on specific photographic practices, a window, a computer screen and a smart phone screen provided an opening, a liminal surface between the private and the social. This individual positioning and negotiating that position takes place in that liminal space, which presents itself as an affordance.

Instead of viewing serial photography as associated with institutional order and methods of surveillance, my focus here has been on orders that start from individuals, an impulse, not to archive but to put in order, sort out, create lists, play with and make sense. Photography becomes a means of creating an active, physical relationship with the world, beyond mere looking. As for the role of social media and digital platforms more broadly, their significance in this inquiry lies not only in the way they make interaction possible, but in the way they support and enable serial photography to happen. They make repetition possible, and they make serial presentation readable and activate the viewer, instead of promoting a disembodied and non-suturing gaze. I have deliberately focused on those kinds of uses of online photography that can be described as 'wholesome' and caring, rather than paying attention to the more sinister aspects of social media. This does not mean I do not acknowledge the problems involved with them. I don't have any solutions for how to work out, for example, the way social media has been in recent studies seen to induce dependant behaviour and depression, especially among young people.

Photography has historically been a medium that brings views, sometimes information, from faraway places to an audience: from there to here. This kind of understanding of photography was at the core of the colonial project in the

495 Galassi, Pleasures and Terrors of Domestic Comfort, 7.
nineteenth century and forms the basis of photojournalism: attempts to represent and mediate the world that lies outside the reach of people living in their own environment. In contrast to this, photography that takes place in the domestic, and immediately available also expresses familiarity with the subject matter. In the quote above, Peter Galassi talks about access to a home, supposedly from outside. What I am foregrounding is the home as a starting point, proposing a photographic outlook of the individual so that they look from inside the body outwards.

When taking photographs of the everyday, one is limited by what there is to see in the first place. Photography is indexical because it points to the act of photographing, and therefore to the conditions under which this act is taking place. For example, someone with limited financial resources living in Helsinki might not be able to photograph the Alps. On the other hand, someone living in the Alps would be able to capture this view whenever they wanted to. To acknowledge and explore what people can photograph, is to root photographic acts in geographical, social and economic circumstances as well as the possibilities and limitations of individual bodies. While photographic technology has become accessible to many through the availability of mobile phones, what they are able to photograph is hardly uniform or evenly distributed.

Iteration and repetition are activities that can be methods for making an unknown familiar, as methods of inquiry. If one is to make a statement that does not disappear into thin air, insistence and persistence may be needed. I propose that the familiar is easily turned into a series, as familiar things are something that one encounters all the time. In this case, familiarity proposes confidence. Photographing the familiar one produces an inquiry into and appreciation of what is already known and, possibly, cherished.

On the other hand, serial photography serves to conceptualise and thus defamiliarise the familiar experience, much like the work of the conceptual artists discussed at the beginning of this thesis did. However, the ‘conceptualising’ that takes place in everyday photography is not necessarily based so much on producing representations of the everyday, but rather brings up other kinds of conceptions of the real, such as connections and preserving acts.

There is a difference between the everyday as a cultural concept and the everyday as lived reality. Photographic representations take part in building the everyday as a cultural and theoretical concept. Photographic series puts the everyday forward as pictorial and conceptual notions, but on the other hand taking photographs serially is enmeshed in an embodied, lived experience of the everyday. My focus has been on the latter, on how serial photographic acts take place in the flow of life while the series that result from these acts also create representations of those acts. For viewers, the everyday becomes palpable as pictures and the pictures act as indices of someone taking the pictures. Serial presentation cannot be separated from the orders and flows in which it is produced.
In Chapter One, I discussed the repetition and ordering of the everyday in conceptual artworks in the way they imposed a repetitive act on biological orders. I discussed artworks that created conceptual orders that were placed within more primary orders belonging to everyday activities like waking up or social actions. For conceptual artists, serial order was not a form. It was, in the words of Mel Bochner, “a method, not a style”. In many conceptual artworks, the everyday became conceptualised through ordering and seriality. I have attempted to move beyond this understanding of the serial by linking it to actual, material contingencies, and view serial ordering as a necessary response, rather than a method. However, everyday serial photographic acts do also create a similar conceptualisation and performative effects.

Repeating something over and over has performative potential. The conceptual artists followed pre-given scores, and their work was related to the idea of a speech act, utterances that eventually are inscribed in the series and can be used to describe it. Following Margaret Iversen’s writing on the subject, the concept of ‘performative photography’ explains this way of taking photographs serially in conceptual artworks. Barbara Bolt states in relation to artistic research that: “Art practice is performative in that it enacts or produces ‘art’ as an effect”. Perhaps serial photography can also be thought of as performative in another sense, in the way it is set in iterative everyday practices, within conventions, and produces other kinds of acts as its effects.

What is common to my cases is that the works all depict something quite literally: point the camera towards something that can be understood as denotative; a shopfront, a Google image of an oil stain, a seashore, moonlight in the suburbs. Despite these literal qualities of the photographs, the serial action that produces them creates other dimensions: social belonging, care, and preservation. Instead of thinking of what kind of conceptual and material formations and notions, artworks and archives result from serial photography, we could think that acting serially produces not representations but further acts and directions. This ‘excess’ is perhaps something that presents the performative force in photographic seriality, a force that has the power to move.

Overview

Everyday life and mundane experiences are often the subject for photography. If our reality is mostly constructed as living an everyday life, then documenting it photographically, that is, taking pictures of what is in front of our eyes, seems like a gesture that makes sense. The attraction to photographing everyday life may originate in the very difficulty of grasping it. To photograph the everyday is to try to stop the flow of time, to create a pause, or perhaps to make sense of it; to take the everyday, expose it, put it forward, represent it to gain some distance from it.

When something becomes removed from the flow of events, it becomes an object for aesthetic and intellectual consideration. At the same time, taking photographs may be anything but keeping a distance from reality. Photography is so embedded in daily life as a routinised activity, and is in fact reminiscent of that very flow of the ordinary, that achieving a disinterested or distanced attitude becomes complicated.

Moreover, photographs that take a slice of life and present it as a frozen moment are no longer singular but belong to a mass of images. Photography is then enmeshed with the everyday character of the abundance of images that surround us daily. Photography takes part in everyday life through photographic actions such as taking and looking at photographs, as well as sharing them with others.

Taking photographs makes the ‘grey everyday’ in some cases more palatable. This can be a sense of elevation a photographic act brings: focusing on one moment and taking an image of it. The everyday is structured as a rhythm varying between heightened moments and dull concurrence of days. Photography, in how it exists as instantaneous: a single frozen moment, and as continuous: in repetition that may appear as boring or comforting depending on one’s view, reflects this dynamic of temporal variation. In addition, seriality can be applied as a model for describing quotidian online digital photography. As opposed to a ‘flow’, seriality offers recursion and stasis. By this I mean that despite a certain fleeting nature of images online, the photographs also appear iteratively, building continuously on each previous photograph.

I have dealt with serial photography as an ongoing practice, tied to the rhythms of the everyday and acting out a relationship to said everyday. Each of my case studies presents serial photography as action belonging to the present that builds ties with that present and produces new contingencies within it. Photographic acts produce digital or material objects that can be (and often will be) stored and archived as records of what has happened. I have tried to keep my focus on how these acts, when happening as part of everyday life, rather than conserve, instead preserve and maintain ephemeral phenomena outside what they depict.

Serial expression is a set of acts that responds to the surrounding world in embodied and affective ways. This expression may end up as a photographic series with a regimented appearance, but the activity and intentions behind its making can be far from rigid. A photographic series comes into being sometimes more systematically, sometimes when there is an occasion, when we notice something. Seriality is not necessarily a modality of creating exact orders, but can be addressed as flowing, random, progressive, generative, in process and unfolding. Serial expression is then a practice of open engagement with phenomena.

Serial photography can be acted out in either a predetermined or a habitual way. While it takes a narrow view of phenomena, serial photography also presents an opening to chance, to the unexpected and to whatever might appear as new, extraordinary and meaningful in the monotony that the series presents and within which it is located. Together with the image series it produces, a serial act may
in its repetitiveness and predictability be soothing. It can bring safety and clarity
to what in the everyday could be experienced as chaotic. Focus, grounding, a
necessary pause can be read from the way attention is given.

My approach suggests that both the institutional order of the archive and the
rigid conceptual ordering acts of conceptual art are complemented by the study of
individual, embodied orderings and how they take place in photography. In order
to fully discuss the ways photography is part of everyday life, the serial dimension
of photography needs to be taken along. Forgoing what seriality might mean is to
forgo much of the ways we practise photography daily, and the ways it influences
our daily life and sociability.
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Appendix: Photographs and artwork
Artworks *Plane Collection, Footbridge and Portrait of a Building* have been exhibited in 2018 at Photographic Gallery Hippolyte.
Plane Collection 2013–2019

A series of appr. 100 colour photographs, sizes vary.
Excerpt from the series on pages 180–189.
Footbridge 2016–2017

The photographic sequence presents a footbridge in East Helsinki set to be demolished (and has been since demolished). The footbridge was part of the 1960s town planning of the suburb. It was a crossing over a motorway and provided a safe walking route from one part of the area to another, and connected a large area of apartment buildings with the local school, a health centre and a cluster of grocery stores and pubs. A new mall has now been erected and has transformed the original structure of the spot. The area is still under development and although there were plans to re-build a bridge, the plans have been revoked.

As I photographed the bridge with a large-format camera, I made fieldnotes in an attempt to transcribe the experience of photographing one's surrounding. What is the experience of photographing like, and does it have some meaning?
Notes 6th September 2016

time 9.30-10.30 am

I was standing right on top of the stairs
first two pictures: distance 100
aperture f 32, exposure times 1/8 s and ¼ s

There were pedestrians on the bridge, mostly elderly people, who moved slowly. A middle-aged (or past middle age) woman approached from behind me. I asked her to wait so that I could photograph the bridge without people. We were waiting together so that an old lady walked past the camera. To make conversation, I said: “I wonder when they will demolish the bridge”. The woman replied: “I don't know. It's something we wait in dread. The way across the motorway will become longer and more dangerous, the bridge has been handy.” She was specifically worried about the school children.
I took another set of photos, but I fumbled with the camera and had suddenly twisted it into a really strange angle. It all started when I tried to change the focal length, because the image seemed stretched, I mean the lampposts were curved. I changed the focal length until it seemed right (distance 150-160). When I had focused, I started to frame the image again and again, until I finally realised that some of the screws had been loose and the image was twisted. I straightened the front plate of the camera and tightened the screws. I managed to frame the image, even managed to focus. But I don't know if it turned out any good.

Three girls from elementary school were rushing over the bridge and passed the camera almost hand in hand: "Quick, before we're going to be late".

Other two photographs: distance 150-160
aperture 32, exposure times ¼ and ½

I was thinking about exposure. I had to meter the light with a digital pocket camera, because the battery of the light meter is empty (again). The sun was shining brightly and the shadows were strong. The exposure times with f 8 were going between 1/10 s and 1/125 s.
Notes 12th September 2016:
Shooting at 9.30–10 am
distance: I think it was 150
aperture f 32, exposure times ½ s. and 1 s.

I only shot two sheets. The weather was colder than earlier. The sun was behind a thin veil of clouds / partly sunny. Leaves on the footbridge. At first, the light seemed interesting, but then it just changed somehow, perhaps because of the sun shifting. I don't know.

There were large wooden signs set up on the side of the street because of refurbishment. They seemed ominous. I wonder when access to the bridge is cut off and my view will be blocked.

I was looking for the right framing, but I don't know how it turned out. I lifted the plate in the front, so that I could include the lamppost completely. The lamppost looked crooked. I tried to straighten it, but with very weak success.

A grandmother with a giggling small child crossed the bridge. I said Hi.

I asked a woman walking a dog to wait so that I could take the photograph. We talked for a long time. Nobody seems to be happy about the footbridge being demolished. We talked about the closings of health care centres and services moving further from people.

I only took two photos. And I think I forgot to dim the aperture in the first image after focusing.
Notes 20th September  
time: 9.25-9.40 am  
distance 150  
aperture f 32, exposure times ½ s. and 1s.

It was cold. Plus 9 degrees and windy. I had been arguing at home about sharing time and who would stay at home with a sick child. I just wanted to get the shoot done quickly. I went to Laajasalo agitated.

The sun was shining again, and assessing the exposure just felt impossible.

I managed to frame surprisingly quickly (or do I just not care). But when I was loading the film cassette, the camera moved. The camera’s piece on the tripod was not fixed. I tightened it and tried to straighten the image the best way I could.
It's been too long since the last time I was here. The light has changed many times. But I just haven't had the time. I loaded the film in the toilet and thought I could never give up large-format photography even just for this moment in the dark. Photography is full of these moments detached from reality, concentrating in the dark.

I was wearing a skirt because all my jeans were dirty. At first, I was considering this, should I go out in the ‘field’ in a skirt. Then thought, why not, all the women at the turn of the twentieth century were working in skirts. But it felt odd, and strangely radical.

The sun was behind a cloud as I went to the bridge. I measured the light with digital camera f8, 1/20s. I sloppily counted that the exposure should be f 32 and 1 second, or f 45 and 2 seconds. I shot the first image with aperture 32, in the other one the sun was peeking from behind the cloud. It was shining at a low angle; I shot the second image with aperture 45 and exposure time 1 second. I was wondering if I had overexposed the earlier photos. Or: did I underexpose this one? I took the first framing that appeared on the camera.
I haven't been here for months.

I drove to Yliskylä to have a look. On the road leading to the bridge was a sign: "road closed 22.-23.4. at night". The bridge is still open. They close it tomorrow. All the trees have been chopped down from around the big road; birches and pine trees. The whole place looks sad.

The footbridge was as if it was hanging on nothing.

They were digging up the ground around the bridge, I couldn't even walk to the place where I had taken the photographs before. The steps that were leading to the bridge were gone. However, the bridge could be accessed so I photographed it. It was insanely cold, it was terribly windy and I had left my gloves at home. My fingers were freezing as I set up the camera nervously. I don't know what came out of it. I think I left some part unlocked. I hope the photos were not blurred. There were election posters on the side of the bridge and as if by magic two city workers came to collect them.

A woman passed me and was surprised, what has happened! I asked, when was the last time she had been here. A couple of weeks ago. I told her I regretted not having been there earlier. I photographed the place, but finally my fingers were so cold I had to stop.
Portrait of a Building 2011–2018

colour positive film and digital images on HDV / dur. 12:15
/ sound: Joonas Sirén

https://vimeo.com/hannat

Portrait of a Building depicts a house due to be demolished in the near future, situated in East Helsinki. Designed as a communal space for the local church in 1969, the site is being used to build housing by a private investor. The modernist building seems oddly invisible within the suburb. This invisibility is echoed in the absence of public debate about its future.

The work draws a portrait of the building – a re-presentation of an existing work of art. Using colour positive film in a 35 mm still camera, I photographed the house during its last remaining years until the demolition. The final work is a moving image work consisting of still images. The work examines this form as a way to exhibit a large sequence of images. In addition, during the course of time as well as my advancement in doctoral studies, the initially planned material of the work is supplemented by snapshots of family life, photographed by a child. The portrait of the building will then also be a portrait of myself, trying to make artistic work between parenting and other obligations. This personal view opens up questions about the politics of suburban environments, town planning and private lives.
Exhibition documentation
Hanna Timonen: Look Every Day

Valokuvagalleria Hippolyte 23.11.–16.12.2018 / Photographic Gallery Hippolyte

Works

*Lentokonekokoelma / Plane Collection, 2013–*
digital print from colour negative
11 x 40 cm x 40 cm, 2 x 80 cm x 80 cm, 1 x 20 cm x 20 cm

*Silta / Bridge, 2016–2017*
chromogenic colour photograph, gelatin silver print, gelatin silver prints and text on table
2 x 44 cm x 55cm, 14 x 21 cm x 21 cm

*Talon muotokuva / Portrait of a Building, 2011–2018*
colour positive film and digital images on HDV kesto 12:15 / dur. 12:15
/ sound: Joonas Sirén
Orders / In the Year 2021 and In the Year 2020 are photographic series that are supplemented with writing that consists of fieldnotes that I made during the process as well as reflections on gathering the photographs. They have formed an integral part of my thought process during the development of this thesis.
Orders / In the Year 2021

Throughout the year 2021 I visited a viewing spot that is located in Eastern Helsinki close to my home. I took photographs at the site that presents a view of a forest landscape and a snow depot to which snow from Helsinki city streets is transported. The place is also a recreational area and bird-watching site. Since it is located near where I live, I would go and take photographs whenever I had a chance. Taking photographs was contingent on my personal whims and everyday possibilities. The photographs have two vantage points: a snow depot in a romantic landscape and wooden steps that people use for fitness. In addition, I took a photo of the moon whenever I could see it from my home window.

In 2021 I realise: I cannot go on with the large format. The format is so laborious and the actual act of going to the site with the camera and setting it up is likely to start becoming a performance. I don't like being a spectacle, and it's obvious that this will happen. Besides, is it an appropriate way to incorporate photography as part of the everyday? Yes, it is part of my everyday, as I have obliged myself to do it. Yet, I need something lighter. As an act, taking photos with a Rolleiflex is not that complicated. In fact, it's not complicated at all. It's only the postproduction that is laborious – like when picking mushrooms or berries, one needs to clean them before they are used or preserved. I take films to the lab to be processed, and I get negatives that I scan. They need to be cleaned and polished.

So I start taking the camera with me whenever I want/can. I go to play in the snow with the children and take the camera with me. I will rely on my experience, and just expose whatever I feel like. If it is cloudy, I am thinking; probably aperture 8 and exposure time 1/30 or 1/60. If it's evening, I just set the camera to f3,5 or f5,6, and hope for the best. If the photo should be under- or overexposed, or should it be out of focus, or shaken, I will not care. I just take the photos and worry afterwards, what my pickings are, and whether they are consumable. This is the method. (Working notes 1.2.2021)

The everyday as a sphere for taking photographs

The series was a continuation of the questions that arose from photographing the series Plane Collection. How could I articulate a personal positioning between my ordinary life that included home life, busy working life and taking photographs. Could I make artistic work amongst my other duties and home life? Taking photographs of what is at hand is a familiar method in photography, and home life has been the focus of photography throughout its history. However, I did not want to depict my domestic life, nor my children.

I wanted to explore how I could make my own process more visible, while maintaining the deadpan, repetitive outlook I favour in my works. My approach was laid-back: I tried to avoid any real attempts at precision, or the drudgery that is involved when making a rule-based work. Instead, I followed my ordinary living conditions. I would try to keep to going to the spot twice a week, but I only did it when I had the chance. Sometimes I had a child with me, and sometimes I would pop out of the flat really quickly, and sometimes taking photographs provided a moment of contemplation.
The process of taking the photographs, as well as the bulk of resulting the images, can be interpreted as mundane, boring repetition. On the other hand, many of the images are picturesque, and their subject matter is typical of what can be seen shared on social media platforms.

After two and a half months I have some 10 full rolls of medium format film; shots from the viewing point but also shots from inside our home of the moon. The viewing spot is always there, but the moon is more sporadic. First of all, it might be cloudy and the moon is not visible. Secondly, since we only have windows facing two directions; east, and southwest, the moon doesn't appear in view every night. The moon becomes an event. Sometimes my partner comes in from a walk, exclaiming: now there's a great moon for you to photograph. Sometimes I peek from the windows. Once I was woken at 4 am as I had forgotten to close the curtains properly, and the moon glared brightly, waking me up.

I was first thinking I would form two series from the photos, alternating between the moon and the viewing spot. But then thought why bother extracting individual images, framing them as singled out. Would it not reflect and express better the process if I showed only the contact sheets of each film. Then all my bracketing would be visible, the real order of images, and the flow of the everyday and the labour could be sensed. (Working notes 19.3.2021)

Orders

Our everyday life is subject to a multitude of orders. These orders are biological, natural, celestial, to do with the cycles of seasons, and with circadian rhythms. We get up, the sun comes up, the sun goes down, and we go to sleep. These happen automatically, but not always in sync. The orders that govern us may be based on the natural sciences, but then there are institutional, economic, cultural and social orders, which are complicated. All these orders are intertwined and overlapping. In the photographs people go up and down the stairs as they have imposed an exercise regime onto themselves. These regimes are needed for the body to function, and to stay in shape against its inevitable decay.

These orders are material, but what about the conceptual or representational ordering that is made available through photography? The iPhone as well as Google Images work in this encyclopaedic fashion, when they impose their algorithm directed orders on people's personal photographs. I can find in my Google photos Albums with the categories 'Food', 'Birthday', or 'Skylines'. I can search with keywords such as 'love', and from my photo archive I get a constellation of photographs of my children hugging, and symbols of hearts. What does it mean that an everyday is ordered in this fashion? Why do we let the algorithms into our most intimate experience: our everyday flow of personal images?

If my data, the photographs I have accumulated over the course of the calendar year, were subject to these different orders, then what would they look like?
clouds
In the Year 2020

28 black and white photographs.

Snow is a contested issue in Helsinki. Once awaited, first snow turns into a problem when there is too much of it for the city's infrastructure. At night or in the early morning the streets will be ploughed, and the excess snow deported to different sites around the outskirts of the city centre. Both increased snowfall and record warm snowless winters that are a result of the climate change will complicate this issue in the future.

I made a year-long series on the site during 2010, photographing with a field camera. In 2020 I wanted to revisit the site, but this time I chose black and white film instead of colour. When I started taking photographs in early January in 2020 I did not know that this was going to be a record warm year, and there would be no permanent snow in Helsinki, meaning there wasn't snow on the ground for longer than 24 hours during the whole winter. This is exceptional. After all, even the mildest winters in Helsinki usually have snow, and at least a few weeks of sub-zero temperatures. This meant that I photographed a snow depot, which would stay empty throughout the whole year.

In the Year 2020 there was no snow, but what shaped most of the year was the global pandemic. In Finland, the schools closed in mid-March. I continued to take photographs as planned. This was probably the only thing in my life that was not affected by the lockdown. But everything else around was different.

During the spring and summer, I got increasingly sloppy with the process. Or routinised, but not in a good way. When it comes to the camera and photographing with it, I am in a rut, which manifests itself in the way I just want to get everything done quickly. I hate the view I see through the camera. The horizon is never straight, and I am not interested in what is there. Because I choose the days I go to the site randomly, I rarely get a light or mood that would inspire anyone. Instead, it's either cloudy in the way that the sky is evenly cast with clouds, or it's sunny so that the light is uninteresting.

The skip exists in the proximity of a local forest that is partly a nature reserve, and an important site for migratory birds and hence a bird-watching site as well as a place for people to do exercise and walk their dogs. During the pandemic, people started to visit the site more often than before. This increased my resentment of photography because there were always many people on the site, some enjoying the view, some doing push-ups, or taking photographs of the view.

For me, this evoked a feeling of being myself on display. In order to take a photograph, one needs to erect a tripod, take out the camera body, then attach the lens separately, look through the viewfinder and focus inside a dark cloth. I always get a little uneasy underneath the cloth when there are other people around. Photographing with a large format becomes an event in itself, an almost performance, a spectacle for passers-by to look at.

At some point during the autumn, I realised that going to do my photos had become an unpleasant chore. I guess there was always a threshold to pack the camera, and go to the site, a task that was rewarding once it was taken care of, in a similar manner to exercise. One is not always so keen to go for a jog yet feels happy afterwards. There is the idea of doing it and thinking I just cannot be bothered. And then you push yourself, focusing on the reward that is completing the task.
I started thinking about photography as a tedious chore, and whether such artists who use the kind of systematic method ever got tired of their artwork. I could imagine, for example, a musician getting pleasure from rehearsing but at the same time experience the wearisomeness of repetition. I wasn't committed to going to the site every day, a fact I anticipated would be interpreted as laziness – at least I felt lazy, and guilty. The whole series would make so much more sense if it rigorously built itself around a specific brief such as photographing every morning at 10, instead of merely following my own mood swings and everyday possibilities, and just going there whenever I felt I had a moment. This made me think that this random and whimsical temporal rhythm, was in fact very ordinary. If photography is an act that is taken in and through the everyday life, then it could be reminiscent of many daily tasks which can happen systematically or in a more random manner; going to the bus stop, taking out the rubbish, or more creative everyday things like baking and cooking. This echoes the way a photo series is made; sometimes more systematically, sometimes when there is an occasion, when we notice something. And, sometimes, when we don't want to.
Seriality and the everyday are elusive notions that are nevertheless central to photography. This thesis examines photographic seriality as an artistic practice and a quotidian activity. The everyday is not treated as subject matter to be photographically represented; rather photography is understood as a practice deeply embedded in the experience of everyday life. I argue that in order to understand the ways photographic acts take place in the flow of life, an understanding of photographic seriality is vital.