

“Interesting Dissensus”

Exploring a contemporary analog photographic practice through
aesthetic theory

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Abstract

In this paper I will be exploring my own personal analog photographic practice, through the use of contemporary aesthetic theory. The goal of this is to achieve a greater understanding of the presence of analog photography in a contemporary context, and increase my consciousness of my own practice. I will first define the concept of analog, and the aspects of it. Then by exploring the aesthetic theory of Dissensus, I will find its relation to the analog process in its conflict with the contemporary social media culture. Further the aesthetic category of interesting will give a understanding of the weakness related to aesthetic judgement, and the weakness of analog, and how they both can become strengths. Finally I will then be applying this to a practice based research method, and create a “interesting dissensus” method that gives names and concepts to various aspects of my own practice, and can be further used by others.

Sammendrag

Eg vill i dette masterprosjektet utforske min egen analoge fotografiske praksis, gjennom bruken av kontemporær estetisk teori. Målet med dette er å oppnå en bedre forståelse av tilstedeværelsen av analog fotografi i en kontemporær tekst, og øke min egen bevissthet over min egen praksis. Eg vill først definere konseptet av analogt, og aspektene med det. Og så ved å utforske den estetiske teorien av Dissens, vill eg finne den sin relasjon til den analoge prosessen i sin konflikt med den kontemporære sosiale medier kulturen. Videre vill eg utforske den estetiske kategorien Interesting, som vill gi en forståelse av svakheten relatert til estetisk dømmekraft, og svakheten til det analoge, og korleis de begge kan bli til styrker. Til slutt vill eg så påføre dette til en praksis basert forskningsmetode, og skape en “Interesting Dissensus” metode som gir navn og konsepter til flere aspekter av min egen praksis, og kan videre bli brukt av andre.

Introduction

As someone who was born in the year 2000, my entire life I've been surrounded by digital photography. In some ways, I wasn't even aware an alternative to digital photography existed until 2020. During primary school, I got my first mobile phone, a hand me down through my family, an orange Sony Ericsson phone that came with a camera. And I wasn't alone, already at this age, everyone around me had access to cameras and would carry one around them almost the entire day, but rarely were pictures ever taken or viewed. However as technology evolved and camera phones got better cameras and more storage, more and more everyone would start taking pictures. Originally images were being shared face-to-face, but with Facebook opening up in 2006 and creating a feed that would allow anyone to post content to share with their friends, (Grove, 2014) more and more people would start sharing their pictures online. I created my Facebook account in 2010, I was 10 years old at the time, so I lied and claimed I was born in 1982, but I was still one of the later ones in my class to create an account. From then on technology and social media grew, and more and more pictures were being shared online, in 2012, Facebook acquired Instagram, a social media app focused on simply sharing pictures, which had 40 million users at the time, (Holak, 2017) as Facebook was surpassing 1 billion users. (Oberlo, 2023) What these products mastered, was instant gratification, (Alsop & Thibault, 2014) and digital photography played a big role in the evolution of this instant gratification culture. With newer phones, technology quickly moved towards a goal of nourishing this instant gratification culture, by creating devices that had better cameras, with faster interfaces, with faster internet speeds, and greater internet connection. This technological evolution all helped users go from taking a picture to sharing it instantly, with some apps making it so you won't even have to leave the app to take a picture. Along with the social media culture meaning we are now even more connected with complete strangers online (Lenhart & Madden, 2007), this meant that at every moment, everyone had instant access to a near infinite amount of pictures being taken and shared digitally online, along with digital feedback from anyone in the forms of "likes" and comments.

Key concepts

Artistic research, photography, analog, aesthetics, Dissensus, Interesting, artistic practice

Background for project

I have chosen to explore the contemporary analog photography scene, as this is a scene I happen to find myself in. Even though my background in the art world comes from painting, and my main goal then was to become a great painter, working on abstract portraits with oil paints, what turned the spark of artistic interest into a flame, was when I turned to photography. When I was studying at the bachelor in arts and crafts, I ended up purchasing a digital camera, which would be the first camera I had that was fully mine, that was a dedicated camera, instead of a phone. My original intention, was to simply use it as a tool for documenting my paintings, and the process behind them, both for use in my education, but also to share online on social media, in an attempt to grow some kind of audience. Originally I was quite biased against photography, not seeing it as something worthy of a lot of thought or analysis, not really capable of creating something of interest. But my curiosity for it grew as I was spending more time with it, and soon I started using it as more than a tool for documenting. And as with most hobbies, it quickly grew into an obsession, especially when I got my first analog camera, an old 80s all plastic camera, bought second hand from someone that was a journalism student many years ago, living in an apartment block not far from mine. The introduction of the analog process is what really flicked the switch for me, the slower process, the traces of the photographer left behind from the image taking, to developing, to printing, and that you don't get to truly see your images until the process is finished. All of this is what inspired this project, where I am exploring the process of analog photography, viewing it through aesthetic theory, to analyse the analog in the analog process.

Thesis

How can the combination of Dissensus and Interesting, be used to understand a contemporary analog photographic practice

The analog revival

David Sax is a Canadian journalist and writer, and has written the book “The revenge of analog. Real things and why they matter.” A book about modern culture, and how the digital age we are in was signalled to be the end of all digital media, but instead ended up giving rise to analog things. Sax begins the book by detailing his own experience, discovering the revival of vinyl records and record stores, as most people in 2012, Sax had been moving all his music from physical media such as CDs into his computer and phone, which would all eventually be moved onto the cloud. (Sax, 2017, 9) All this was made in an effort to move away from physical media, and tools such as cd players and turntables, yet Sax tells about an experience where he was walking by a record store, and was immediately stopped by the sound of a vinyl record of Arehta Franklin’s “Live at the Fillmore West.” This led to him immediately purchasing this record and taking it home, to later dig out his old turntable and listen to it, and this simple act of listening was in some ways a small epiphany, as this was the first time in a long while that he had been actively listening. Somehow the act of bringing out a turntable and a record, setting it all up, just to listen to an album, was easier than the digital alternative where essentially any music you could want was only a click or two away. (Sax, 2017, 10) With this Sax’s vinyl collection would again start to grow, leading to a reflection over analog things, and an exploration of the analog cultural renaissance.

This new revival of vinyl records and record stores kept growing, an industry that for many years had been expected to be doomed to extinction, or thought of as already extinct, would somehow again not only begin to survive, but to thrive. Now the typical record store customer would be described as “crummy old men looking for great records in dollar bins,” and the type of “graying ponytail secured behind a balding crown, tattered Jane’s Addiction concert T-shirt tucked into patched black jeans, endless soliloquies of cultural superiority emerging from their lips,” by Andrew Zukerman, a clerk at June record store. (Sax, 2017, 11) But with the new rise in popularity of record stores, it wasn’t just more of these types coming to the store, but instead a dramatic change in customer base, with mostly younger customers in their twenties and even teens, and to the surprise and relief of one of the record store owners, even girls were coming to buy records, which he saw as proof that things

had changed. The surprising thing with this new customer base, is that these young people, are people who never grew up with records or even CDs, but only had known music as virtual files. The media would try to explain this growing cultural trend, putting it on buzzwords such as “authenticity, nostalgia, and millennial,” or by simply blaming it all on the “hipster trend,” setting them up as a scapegoat, but Sax saw this change in the music industry as just a single part of a bigger phenomenon, titling it as the “revenge of analog.” (Sax, 2017, 12)

Sax presents the act of listening to music on a turntable using a vinyl record as “less efficient, more cumbersome, and not necessarily superior to a digital file played on the same stereo,” but yet it somehow felt more rewarding. Sax explains the process of listening to a record as involving more of your physical senses, using your “hands, feet, eyes, ears, and even mouth,” leading to an experience that was much less efficient, but because of this, was more fun. (Sax, 2017, 13) This different experience, was different, as it was an analog experience, which in a broad sense, means the opposite of digital, “Analog is the yin to digital’s yang, the day to its night.” Sax defines the analog as things that don’t require a computer to function, and most of is something that exists in the physical world, as opposed to the virtual world of the digital and software. Through this definition, Sax started to notice a trend that was happening, where technologies that had been commonly seen as obsolete with current technological innovations, were slowly beginning to show new life. The new trends of things that didn’t require computers were things such as “letterpress cards and invitations, film photography, handmade leather goods and watches, new print magazines, fountain pens, and, ofcourse, vinyl records.” (Sax, 2017, 14)

This sudden surge in analog things seemed especially surprising in a time where most people were thinking of “inventing the next great app.” Online shopping and software, which were heralding the end of analog things, were somehow being replaced with physical places, selling physical analog things. (Sax, 2017, 14) This trend quickly grew to reach even major corporations, which lead to them adapting, proving that this trend was bigger than just simply “hipsters” or grumpy old people refusing to change. Tech ceo’s were taking notes using physical journals, several chain stores began carrying polaroid film and cameras, Whole foods, an american grocery chain, started selling vinyl records, and Silicon valley corporations would

send their employees on retreats, forcing them to unplug from the internet and technology. As we were moving into a world defined by digital technology, we were seeing academics studies instead focusing on the importance of real-life interactions, and reading on paper, as almost all knowledge was available in a virtual world in our pockets, but instead we were “witnessing the Revenge of Analog.” (Sax, 2017, 15)

Sax argues that the narrative of technological innovation isn't a growth “from good to better to best”, but instead “a series of trials that helps us understand who we are and how we operate.” That technology has become so good, was precisely why we were witnessing the revenge of analog. The past half century we have spent with digital computing, seeing it grow from personal computers, to the internet, and to the smartphone, among many other things. If you want something done cheap, and efficient, the most widely used and obvious tool today is using a digital solution, from advanced mathematics, to having food appear at your door. Now this should mean, that the “overwhelming superiority” of digital solutions, should mean that any analog alternative should be devalued and seen as worthless, but over time, it seems that this perception of the value of digital and value of analog, shifts. Sax sees this early praise and glory of the digital as a “honeymoon period,” and that only when this period is over, are we able to truly judge the digital technology, and see its merits and shortcomings. Often, it is seen after this honeymoon period, that the analog tool works better, and its weakness and inefficiency, is seen as a strength. (Sax, 2017, 16)

In a time where we are surrounded by digital things, we begin to crave analog things that are tactile and “human-centric,” and this revenge of analog that we see today might just be the beginning. What we see from the revenge of analog is that digital evolution isn't absolute, and that though we may gladly adopt new solutions, they will only last in the long run, if they give us a better experience. This potential better experience, Sax claims, is not only that the analog can provide real-world pleasures and rewards that digital is unable to, but also that at times the analog outperforms the digital. The restraints placed on us by analog things, instead of hindering productivity, actually increases it, as we can see in how it seems easier for ideas to flow when working with a pen and paper, over a keyboard or touchscreen. Now this does not mean that the goal of this is to rid us of all digital technology. The people

and corporations who are supporting this revenge of analog, aren't doing so searching for a nostalgic predigital past. Instead of pushing the digital world away, instead they are pulling the analog one closer, and often using tools from the digital world to do so. (Sax, 2017, 17)

The choice that is presented to us today isn't a simple binary choice between analog or digital, as in reality our world isn't that simple. Instead our world is messy, and infinitely complex, but in this human imperfection and complex reality, is where the best ideas come from. And though you may not jump straight into an analog world and read a book whilst listening to a vinyl record, there is still much to be gained from looking deeper into how we interact with the world. As this messy complex world is also what led to this revenge of analog, and what will lead it further, into seeing the future of technology, without forgetting the past. (Sax, 2017, 18)

Artistic inspirations

The inspiration for this project is also part of the subject of the story, there are several Norwegian contemporary photographers whose work could in some way be related to this project, such as Helge Skodvin, Dag Alveng, Torbjørn Rødland, Jacqueline Landvik, Terje Abusdal, and several others, but the artist I am currently focusing on are Morten Andersen, Ellie Rokhaug, and Linda Bournane Engelberth

Contemporary context - photography as contemporary art

Charlotte Cotton is a curator and writer, and has written the book "The Photograph as contemporary Art" to collect some of the ideas present in contemporary photography. Cotton presents contemporary art photography as fundamentally diverse in both form and intent, and as a result of the efforts of many independent practitioners. All the works presented in this book are works that are committed to contributing to the physical and intellectual space of culture. With this, they are works created for viewership, to be placed on walls in galleries or pages in art books, "with the intention of elaborating, pinpointing and making departures from resonant cultural ideas." (Cotton, 2014, 7) What we see in contemporary art photographers, is that many of them have some form of education relating to art, and work in a similar way to other fine artists, by creating work specifically for an audience of art viewers.

This shows an increase in professional infrastructure that further supports photography as contemporary art. (Cotton, 2014, 8) Though photography has had a more unsure position in the world of art previously, its role in contemporary art has been strengthened significantly during this new millennium. This is thanks to many of the groundbreaking photographers, leading a conceptual rethinking of photography as art, and the ongoing appraisal of the role photography has played in recent cultural and social history. Though we still see historic photographic techniques and practices used today, they are being activated in a new way in the context of our “contemporary image-making environment.” (Cotton, 2014, 9)

In this contemporary image making world, where photographic contemporary art is just a component, there is also the purely “image-based communication” that plays a role in our daily interactions, through things such as social media. This has also led to an increase in photobooks, where everyone is able to host their own on various image-sharing platforms, and through the developments of digital printing. Part of this image making world is also the unauthored machine-made and read images, such as state surveillance, corporate data-mining, and 3D imaging and printing software. (Cotton, 2014, 9) These too play a role in shaping the photograph as contemporary art, as they affect our visual languages, and the circulation of images, as well as they push us to more specifically define what qualifies as artistic photographic practice. With this we see how artist-photographers create work by consciously resisting and questioning what we see as mainstream ideas and uses of photography. With their goal being to “protect at least one arena where the basic democracy of photography preserves the right to observe and to be seen, and to articulate personal narratives and human stories.” (Cotton, 2014, 10)

Morten Andersen

Morten Andersen’s work focuses on telling stories about identity, people, culture, and what it means to be human. Morten is from a documentary photography background, and his photographs are still reminiscent of this, but in the context of contemporary art, his photographs could fit into the “category” presented by Charlotte Cotton in the book “The photograph as contemporary art” of “something and nothing”, a category of contemporary photography that relates to pushing the boundaries of what visual

subjects that can be presented as art. His photographs can seem like random small moments of everyday life that is lifted up through being photographed. (Forsang, n.d.) (Andersen, n.d.)



Figure 1. (Andersen, n.d.)



Figure 2. (Andersen, n.d.)

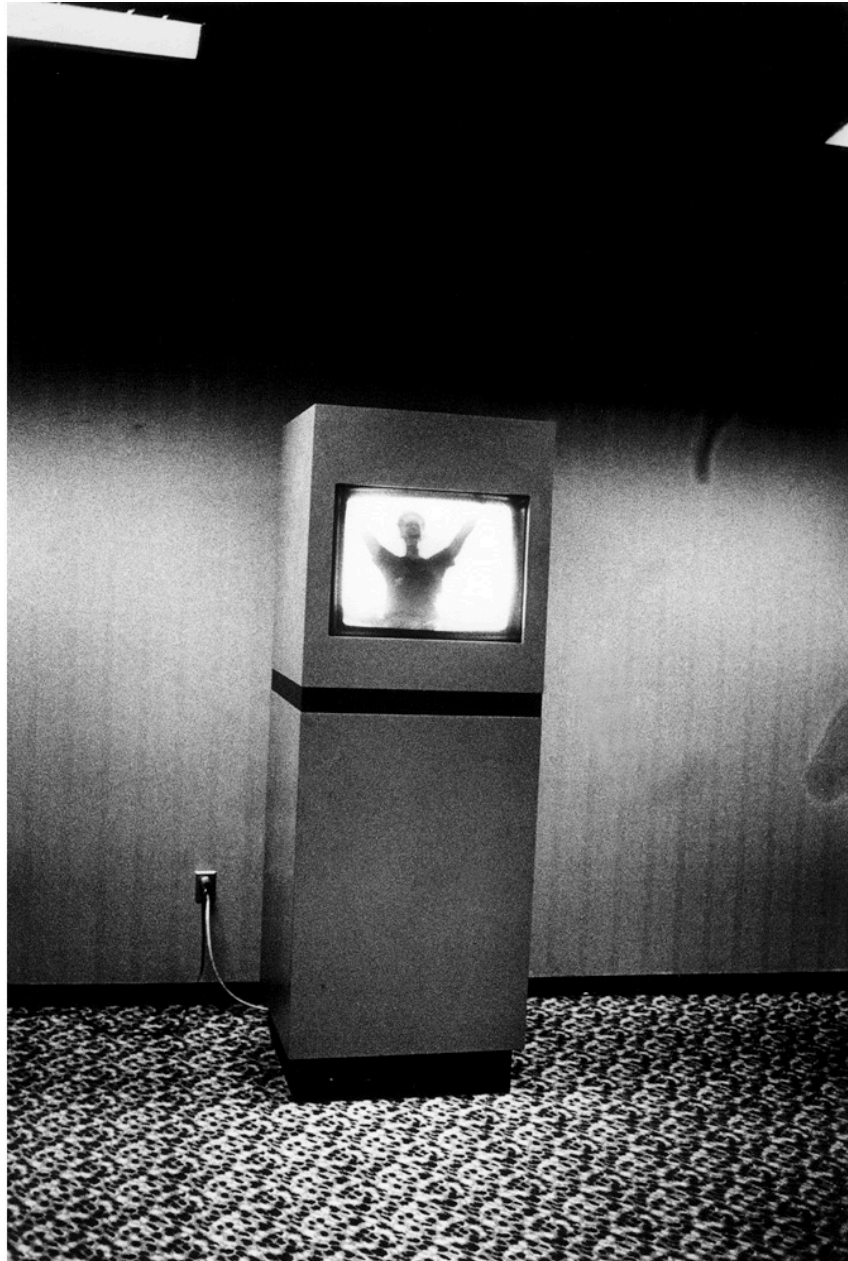


Figure 3. (Andersen, n.d.)

Ellie Rokhaug

Ellie Rokhaug recently won the Portfolio award for the magazine *Fotografi*, a yearly competition for Nordic Photographers. The project that was entered was the project “Prosess”, a series of photographs taken on medium format film, then parts of the negatives were burnt with a negative, before being scanned in. The project is an exploration of identity and self image, with the burning of the negatives working as some form of censorship, removing the parts of the image they don't want shown, reflecting the process the artist is going through as a trans person. Views

photography as a new way to look at the world, and a way to share that view. Goal of her art is to create a space open for questions and curiosity, to help avoid anxiousness around certain subjects such as gender, sexuality, to increase the understanding of them. Returning to Charlotte Cottons categories, Ellie's photographs could fit in the category of "physical and material" in how the medium of photography plays a role in the imagemaking, by the negative being affected by processes outside of photography. (Rokhaug, n.d.) (Otnes, n.d.)



Figure 4. (Rokhaug, n.d.)

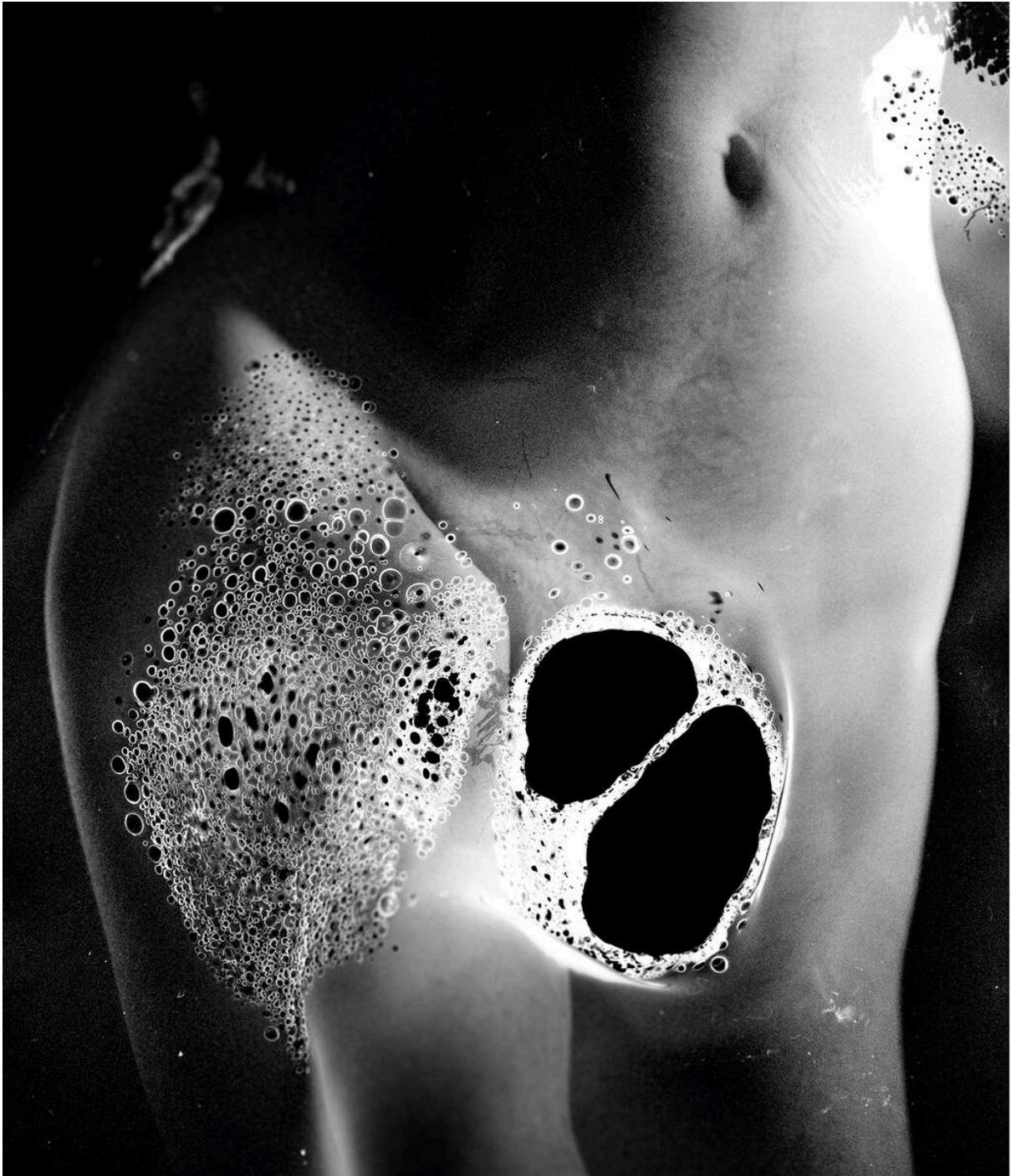


Figure 5. (Rokhaug, n.d.)

Linda Bournane Engelberth

Thirdly, Linda Bournane Engelberth was recently chosen to take part in the “Høstutstilling 2023” with the project “Outside the binary”, but the project I'm mostly taking interest in right now is the project “Persona”. In this project she is staging

photographs where she is taking the place of her mother in the past, and using different models staged as her mothers friends, creating a fictional reality of her mothers past based on photographs by her mother. This project is an interesting example of the category presented by Charlotte Cotton “Revived and Remade”, a type of contemporary photography that works around exploiting pre-existing knowledge, by remaking images, or mimicking certain types of photography. (Høstutstillingen, 2023) (Bournane Engelberth, n.d.)



Figure 6. (Bournane Engelberth, n.d.)



Figure 7. (Bournane Engelberth, n.d.)

Theoretical foundations

Early aesthetics

Aesthetic philosophy, is something that has usually been associated with fine art, even though it was not its original intention when the term was first presented by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten in 1750. (Durdan & Tormey, 2021, 38) Baumgarten's original intention was to introduce the experience of the body into philosophy, an aspect that had previously been largely ignored, with the word "aesthetic" having its origin in the greek word "aisthesis," meaning experience. Quickly this term started to be associated with the development of art criticism and theory, as art became the realm designated with the affective states of aesthetics. From this development, the realm of the aesthetic would narrow even further, leading to a more narrow focus on the term of "beauty," and more specifically the beauty in art, moving the "aesthetic" even further from its original focus on the wide aspect of human experience. (Durdan & Tormey, 2021, 39) Moving on from European romanticism, where the aesthetic shifted to a focus on beauty, during the eighteenth-century, the aesthetics moved into the aristocratic world. With this aesthetics developed into a form of "defensive

discourse” for establishing a defined, correct, “social taste.” This social taste would be decided by someone seen as an “aesthete,” who would be known to have good taste.

Aesthetic philosophy and photography

David Bate is a Professor of Photography at the University of Westminster, who has written several books on contemporary art photography. (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 12) Bate presents the French philosopher Jacques Ranciere, as someone whose writings have made great contribution to recent discussions on contemporary art. (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 37) Photography is a more recent addition to the fine art world, and with that the relation between photography and aesthetic discourse, is introduced, as photography has long had an awkward relation to aesthetics. With this, Bate is not only referring to photography as in art photography, as photography is used as an apparatus that is used in many other practices, many of which have little or no relation to art. What Bate aims to do is apply the philosophies of Ranciere, to this wider practice of photography, to see the relation of it to Rancieres aesthetics. Ranciere’s philosophies differ from most other aesthetic discourses that has roots in classical philosophy, as his belongs to a movement of “radical French intellectual thought” from the 1960s. Ranciere shows a “polymath” interest in contemporary art in several forms of practice, and presents it using a conceptual framework, language, and questions. Because of this wide interest, Ranciere doesn’t work toward the traditional notions of aesthetics relating to specific mediums, but instead focusing on the general political functions of aesthetic operations. (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 37) This differs from the traditional view of aesthetic discourse that focuses on concepts such as beauty and truth, which have also been used to examine photography as art. Ranciere also places emphasis on context, and the issues relating to them in the form of the “modes of perception and regimes of emotion.” (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 38)

As Ranciere’s work is rooted in philosophical and aesthetic theories, there are things that remain quite abstract, leading to some difficulties, especially when applying these to a contemporary photographic practice and discourse. When applying these

to the categories that we commonly use for photography, it becomes even more difficult, with this Bate argues, is that these categories that we use for photography, might be the obstacles that need to be handled to be able to rethink what photography is or does today. (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 38) Ranciere refers to “art,” but often uses it in various ways that can lead to confusion, as with “art” he is not referring simply to just anything that you will find in a museum or an art gallery. Instead, Ranciere sees the category of “art” as many broad variations of “making and doing things,” which in itself, is a step towards rethinking aesthetics, by expanding where aesthetic questions and problems can be found.

“Water is not the same thing to a fish, a fisherman or a meteorologist,” and the same is true when it comes to things such as philosophy and photography. For philosophy, photography is an object for philosophical discourse, and is not the same thing as photography is to a photographer, or an art critic. This means that when philosophers are talking about photography, they are doing so by referring to photography as a concept that can be useful to philosophy, not to develop a photographic practice. Because of this, there has been little development in the understanding of photography, as to do so is not really the concern of philosophers. On the other side as well, there is little regard for philosophical values over things such as truth, even in news photography, as even though it may have clear philosophical value, it is not clear how this would lead to any development in practical photographic discourse. (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 39) This divide between philosophy and photography, has also led to theoretical problems that have already been discussed and developed in photographic theory, will be introduced in philosophy as if they are new questions. (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 40)

One of the bigger of these questions is the question of “what is photography?” A question that has been asked many different ways, but usually the question turns photography into a singular “essence,” that is most often based on a cliché idea of photography. The essence of photography has been presented as being in the instant, which always tells the truth about reality, or as manipulation, or the freezing of time, the capturing of a moment. Further the essence of photography has been described as technical aspects of photography, such as the horizon line and frame,

deep focus, or simply as a technological essence, referring to the technical aspect of light falling onto a chemical base, or in modern terms as invisible metadata, and as light falling onto a sensor leading to abstract computer code. All of these conceptions, end up reducing the complexity of photographic practice in order to formulate it as an abstract singular essence. Bate claims this is because of a trap, the “trap” these philosophers have fallen into, is a linguistic trap, set up as long ago as when the term photography was coined, in order to unite all the diverse practices relating to it. (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 40) Because of this uniting term, we are left to believe that photography is a singular entity, and with recent philosophers repeating this trend, we are returning our understanding of photography to the beginning, and making the same mistakes. What needed to happen was a radical solution appearing in photography theory, to solve this problem of defining photography, and the solution to this would be to simply recognize that photography is not a single thing, and cannot be defined as such. (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 40)

For us to be able to further develop our understanding of photography, we would need a broader framework that includes the sensory experience, and the affect the sensory experience has on photographic images, a conceptual framework for aesthetics. There have been some attempts to create this sort of framework, one such framework was the one created by the modernists. In modernism, the characteristic of photography as a medium was seen “in its purity as a straight (and thus unmanipulated) picture.” (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 42) They saw photography as something honest, following a pure process, in being a purely visual practice. As a reaction to this, came the “Avant-garde photography” that wanted to get rid of these traditional aesthetic values of beauty and purity. Doing so by directly interfering with the purity of the image by adding various material, to disrupt with the “purely visual” aspect of the photographic image. Modernism and avant-garde both presented themselves as aesthetic discourses, but there was also a third, which presented itself as more of an “aesthetic programme.” Social documentary and photographic realism, in the forms of practices such as documentary photography, had its roots in older literary forms of narrative, but were now being presented in new visual forms. Throughout time, these aesthetic formations have been used in ways far from their intention, “exploited” by publicity industries and consumer cultures. It

was dissatisfaction with these categories that led to Ranciere developing a new framework that could be used for art and aesthetics. (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 43)

The three regimes of images

Ranciere introduces the “three regimes of images,” in which photography can be seen not as a singular form, but as forms of identification. Photography then becomes a summary term, as it is defined as a collection of different practices, with no singular purpose, instead of an abstract singular entity that separates itself from art, or being reduced to its functions. The three regimes are distinct conceptual categories consisting of the ethical, representative, and aesthetic regime, defined as the three major regimes of identification. The representative regime follows a general concept of representation, which is quite common in studies of photography, as the aim of representation is to produce imitations. This imitation has become the standard procedure that many communities, cultures, and societies use to define themselves, as the representative regime is used for establishing “forms of normativity” even though it is not necessarily its aim. (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 43)

This representative function of images can also be seen in essays on photography by Roland Barthes, with Ranciere referring to him for how he in “Camera Lucida” engages with the division between the “sayable” and “visible” in the representative regime. In “Camera Lucida” Barthes analyses an advertisement for pasta, by outlining how it uses classical rhetoric, which can often be seen in the “communicative logic of the modern advertising image,” as well as in classical paintings. What Barthes did was showing the complexity of codes that were at work in a photographic image, which lead to deconstructing the supposed “innocence” that an advertising image has. These rhetorical figures of representation are active in several forms of photographic images, such as advertising, documentary, photojournalism and art, but in differing ways. Usually we separate art and media, but using the conceptual framework presented by Ranciere, we can bring out these “media” images through the representative regime. (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 44)

This framework also addresses the common issue seen in critical debates when there is uncertainty over commercial or industrial forms of photography, and whether

they should be seen as art or as a creative process. There is usually objection to assigning aesthetic value to this kind of commercial practice, with the only exception being when they have been allowed to be assigned aesthetic value by being exhibited in an art institution. These commercial and industrial images fit within the ethical regime of images, in which “art is not identified as such, but is subsumed under the question of images.” Ranciere presents the two questions that make up images in the ethical regime, “the question of their origin (and consequently their truth content) and the question of their end or purpose, the uses they are put to and the effects they result in.” The ethical regime covers a very broad spectrum of images, as the ethical regime is concerned with how an image affects communities, and the individuals who receive it. This is not to reduce the ethical regime into politics, as Ranciere sees the political as something that relates to all three regimes. (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 45)

The aesthetic regime and dissensus

The final of the three regimes, is the aesthetic regime, which includes what is identified as art. The aesthetic, is something that interferes with the imitation seen in the representative regime. This relationship between the aesthetic regime and the representative regime is developed further through Ranciere's political couplet “consensus” and “dissensus,” in which the representative is linked to consensus, the “consensual dimensions of society,” and the aesthetic regime is linked to dissensus, the “dissensual sense, which interrupts the representative regime’s conventions of sense.” (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 45) Ranciere further defines dissensus, as it is not something that is calling out for a new “avant-garde,” as an art that directly announces itself as dissensual is unlikely to have much effect. “Dissensus is a conflict between a sensory presentation and a way of making sense of it, or between several sensory and/or ‘bodies’,” the photographic image is something that is very central in everyday workings of consensual society, meaning that it is also very susceptible to these conflicts with the representative regime. (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 45) This means that images that fit into the representative or ethical regime, as they are located within the category of commercial images, can also contribute to the aesthetic regime as well. As the aesthetic works by creating conflict from within the

representative and ethical regimes, all kinds of images such as fashion, editorial photography, and even images relating to images relating to social media platforms, has the potential of creating this conflict, this dissensus. This can also happen if it is not the intention of the author of the work to create this conflict, and also even if it is not recognized as such by an art institution. (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 46)

The dissensual effect of the aesthetic regime is not something that is exclusively identified within an art establishment, or its opposites, meaning that anything can have a dissensual effect, “artworks can produce effects of dissensus precisely because they neither give lessons nor have any destination.” This tells us that something does not have to be recognized as art to be able to have any dissensual aesthetic effect, but also that what is recognized as art does not necessarily have any dissensual effect either. The three regimes, introduces a division of practices, that is not based on its medium, as in photography is not necessarily representative, or painting is not necessarily aesthetic, as the division is not based on their medium, but on their effect. The aesthetic regime, and how it relates to the representative regime through an internal conflict, belongs to the “ethos,” the “community of individuals that constitutes any society.” Aesthetics are therefore not reducible to any singular concept of medium, or any specific institution, Ranciere also rejects that there is a singular general global concept of Western art or aesthetics. (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 46)

Rancieres relation to cinema, he presents as one of a “cinophilie,” one who loves cinema, a passion that lacks discrimination, by mixing together taste and values. Traditionally cinema culture is divided between high and low culture, where high culture films are seen as those that are regarded as serious works, works of art, whilst low culture film are films made purely for entertainment. What Ranciere argues is that this cinephilia, both his own and the general cultural cinephilia, by mixing taste and value, circumvents this division between high and low culture, breaking the boundaries in cinema studies, and also questions the value of aesthetics of all art, and the purity that has been dominant in aesthetics. Ranciere points out moments in films that activate your imagination, leading to the “emotions of the film” that belong to the representative regime being interrupted, as your imagination overlaps them. This is something belonging to the aesthetic regime of the image, as the film creates

these “aesthetic pleasures,” which can also be applied to photography. In photography this can be seen as the small detail, that is just one component of the entire image, which can often be what absorbs the viewers attention. This drawing of the viewers eye, can at times break the intention of the image, where their imagination takes over, preventing the intention of the image within the representational or ethical regime, and instead taking it beyond, into the aesthetic regime. These categories of the representative, ethical, and aesthetic, allow us a possibility to rethink the values and relations of different images, which makes the problem of traditional aesthetics, that binds all of photography within a singular category, even clearer. “If ‘photography’ is not a singular entity, then the categorical aesthetics that it generates are not a singular or ‘pure’ thing either.” (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 47)

During the nineteenth-century, the aesthetic debates around photography, presented photography as painting, and the same painterly values present in European art, also shaped the values of photography as art. This debate changed when American aesthete, photographer and critic Alfred Stieglitz, presented a new “straight” aesthetic of photography. This new aesthetic was intended as the death of pictorialism, instead promoting this new aesthetic of “American” photography that was direct and objective. In his essay “The Majesty of the Moment” Ranciere talks on this change into modernism in art photography. Though his interest in this can at first seem confusing, as this represents another turn of photographic aesthetics moving onto another singular concept, which seems to go against what Ranciere presents in the “Three regimes.” What Ranciere argues is that this new turn isn’t a removal of Pictorialism, in favour of a new sharp, objective aesthetic. Instead this new change in modernist photographic aesthetics, this straightness that it represents, is what can enable the camera to “register the marks of modern civilization on the human body.” (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 48) The “objectivity” of it as well, is not intended as some realist statement on photography, but instead a mark for the photographic “affirmation of ‘straightness.’” The straight aesthetic of photography also introduced a certain awkwardness into the images, which goes further than just simply being non pictorial, and instead introduces dissensual interruption in the images. With this Ranciere presents the “pathos of knowledge” a characteristic of the aesthetic regime, that represents how aesthetic images can remain distinct even through time, where

perhaps the source of the dissensual conflict is not as clear anymore. (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 49)

These details of the aesthetic regime in operation, can risk being understood as a “general ideal,” as a universal concept that can be applied to anything. The dissensus that is present in the straight photography presented earlier, would not have the same effect today, this straightness and objectivity though originally seen as aesthetic and dissensual, will no longer have that effect as the context, and the consensus changes. (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 49) Because of this, there is no set form for what dissensus is, as it can't exist by itself, it has to have the relation to the ethical and representative regimes. With photography now being transformed into computer code, and most images of today going through the cycles of social media. Which encourages people to become “radical artists” by uploading images, though these images quickly end up supplying the representative regime with “crowd-sourced imitation of life.” There is no decided form or medium to the aesthetic regime, so there is no reason why things such as computer code and algorithms can't be used in the aesthetic regime, but also there is no guarantee that they will have any function outside of the representative regime. What comes with the contemporary situation with social media images, is a change in aesthetic expectations, because of the visual experience. The conditions in which we today experience images, is very different from the traditional art gallery experience, as images are viewed on temporary screens in temporary locations, that can be public, or private. These locations can defy any location of culture in which dissensual interruption through aesthetic experience might be possible. These fields of computer simulation and modes of living based on merging, confusing, and hybridising older value systems and distinctions, become a challenge to our contemporary aesthetic thought. The computerization of the world, should not be separated from aesthetics, as what we see from Ranciere is that these new image regimes, are where the new questions of aesthetics come from, and where we work out struggles such as “how we must live” in our different communities. These regimes are also where “those who wish to pursue ‘photography’ must now look to see why, how, where, when and what images are dispersed across them.” (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 50)

Introduction to dissensus in contemporary artists

Morten Andersen challenges the consensus with his alternative aesthetic and choice of subjects, the analog process introduces a lot of extra process and a form of craft into photography, which often leads to photographers saying that because of the added time, process, and the limitations of analog photography, they spend more time deciding whether to take a photograph or not, which results in lifting up the final photographs presented, as a result of a very rigorous elimination process, meaning only the most beautiful photographs are worthy of being taken with an analog camera. Andersen then creates dissensus by using the limitations, process, and craft, that goes into an analog photograph, to lift up photographs that don't follow the rules of a correct beautiful photograph, seeming more like snapshots of small moments of everyday life

Ellie Rokhaug presents photographs that refer to their existence as negatives, and creates dissensus by challenging our view of the negative as an objective document, prints have been slightly manipulated in several different ways throughout time, but it was always nondestructive as the negative remained unchanged, but Rokhaug uses destructive manipulation, changing the negative itself, to display things not usually visible with a photographic process.

Linda Burnane Engelberths project directly plays with history, creating a nostalgic story that never actually existed, using the associations of the analog format with history and nostalgia, to create photographic documents, of an alternate history of someones life, creating dissensus with our view of history and historical documents.

Along with this, all these artists by choosing an analog process create dissensus by going against contemporary culture like the concept of "instant gratification" shown in the use of social media and the infinite stream of images that surround us. As well as the way everything is moving to a digital form, as more and more images are created and viewed digitally, both online, but also in peoples homes, with digital photograph

frames, and frame televisions. The analogue process itself also includes a certain alternative aesthetic, and often several imperfections into an image, because of its longer more hands on process, meaning that every print is slightly unique. Along with this contemporary analog photographers, use camera equipment that was produced many years ago, going against the modern consumerist competition of contemporary camera equipment companies, constantly releasing new equipment with new buzzwords selling you that the newest equipment will always be the best and produce the best photographs

Aesthetics of interesting

Interesting can be a complicated word for many, you might have memory of an experience where you showed someone something you deeply cared about, maybe something that was your own work, or something from someone you hold very highly. And the person you showed it to replied “well that was.. interesting,” and you were left conflicted, unsure of the meaning behind the word interesting. But it is this word Sianne Ngai has chosen, along with cute and zany, as the three aesthetic categories “...best suited for grasping how aesthetic experience has been transformed by the hyper commodified, information-saturated, performance-driven conditions of late capitalism.” These three categories are associated with differing processes of a contemporary capitalist life, for the interesting this is the process of circulation, in which it uses a discursive aesthetic to speak directly to this process, something Ngai claims other aesthetic categories don't. (Ngai, 2015, 1) Along with this zaniness is associated with production, and cute is associated with consumption, although these play a role in establishing the context, what i am mostly interested in for this paper is the aesthetic of interesting, and how it can relate to photography. The application of these categories of aesthetics also reveal some of the deeper issues in aesthetic theory, these categories emphasise the complexity of feelings in aesthetic experiences, the relationship between art, producing knowledge, and theoretical discourse. As Well as the issue of where the future stands for postmodern art when one of its constitutive features is disappearance, or the idea of art as something relating to play instead of labour. (Ngai, 2015, 2)

Ngai describes the aesthetic of interesting as both “epistemological” and “cool,” it is slightly detached from reality, more interested in the philosophical and reflective world, compared to the aesthetic of cuteness, which is more warm, and more intimate with reality. The circulation of interesting is a circulation of information, where the interesting appears in the tension between the known and the unknown. Susan Sontag puts forward that this is an aesthetic closely related to the history of photography, as the interesting often has a “desire to know and document reality.” “The practice of photography is now identified with the idea that everything in the world could be made interesting through the camera... not altogether wrong to say that there is no such thing as a bad photograph-only less interesting [ones],” - Susan Sontag. (Ngai, 2015, s5) With this Sontag claims that through the act of photography, all things can be made equal, as by the act of photographing them, it erases their distinctions, and makes all things comparable, making all things equally interesting. This ability for limitless production of notes on reality, also led to the “crucial innovation” of conceptual art, with the pairing of photography and the notes on reality of everyday observations. This eventually led to conceptual art being praised for being “merely interesting,” (Ngai, 2015, 6) This praise came from how the conceptual art manifested the interesting through its use of a theoretical foundation, exploring how one can live theory. What the aesthetic of interesting brings forward, as well as cute and zany, is how the subject feels and relates towards other subjects, and the conflict that exists in aesthetic judgement, as it is subjective, and depends on taste, the aesthetic category of interesting, shows transparently that the subject has a feeling of interest in this aesthetic experience, and this feeling is the root of its judgement. (Ngai, 2015, 11)

Mieszkowski notes that the interesting never exists uniquely, in a vacuum, but exists through collisions with other interests, “any interest of a person, a tribe or a state is already a counter-interest.” (Ngai, 2015, 12) This refers to the human and social behaviour these aesthetic categories relate to, where the interesting refers to language and communication, as it is difficult to communicate alone in a void, it is where the interests and counter-interests collide, communication happens, and language is the tool for communication. (Ngai, 2015, 13) Same as communication, the interesting is seen as an aesthetic of information, which follows a ““styleless” style,” and became the genre of photography and language-based work in the 1960s

and 70s of the conceptual art movement. Out of this came the novel, a genre of literature that was in some way intended to be the “end of genre” as it wasn’t conformed to any special style, which lead to a lot of both theoretical and critical discourse, leading to the “marriage of art and theory.” (Ngai, 2015, 16)

In analyzing these kinds of less formal aesthetic categories such as “the interesting”, it introduces challenges that are not usually seen in others that fit into the more concise and defined categories of specific artistic movements and periods. Part of this Ngai claims is that these more common aesthetic categories are more resistant to institutionalisation, and are “more difficult to locate in fixed slices of time and space.” (Ngai, 2015, 17) The interesting, the cute, and the zany are associated with specific practices, but were not able to draw the attention of institutional structure or discourses, as they did not give rise to practices that were stable or consistent enough to be captured, making them difficult to bind to a specific time and space. This leads to the necessity of historicizing these aesthetic categories differently, as to restrict these aesthetic categories to just a single, or a small gathering of artefacts, restricted to a small slice of time, would cut off an analysis of their meaning as aesthetic categories. With this we lose the “satisfaction” of a chronological system, but instead we gain a better understanding “of the historicity of some of the basic concepts and categories of aesthetic theory itself.” (Ngai, 2015, 18)

Comparing the categories of zany, interesting, and cute, to the more traditional aesthetics of the sublime and the beautiful, which are lifted up to both moral and theological heights, the categories of zany, interesting, and cute, appear quite trivial. The interesting revolves around this feeling of interest, a small flicker of an emotion, that appears when we recognise something as being different from a norm, something fairly inconsequential. (Ngai, 2015, 18) Another contrast is how these categories bring attention to their own weakness, or lack of aesthetic impact, in stark contrast to most other aesthetic categories that do the exact opposite. Along with the triviality of these categories, they also seem to impose quite ambiguous judgements, as it is unsure whether one considers something positively or negatively when these categories are used. These factors of these categories is what makes them well suited for the “analysis of art and aesthetics in today’s totally aestheticized present.” (Ngai, 2015, 19) With this Ngai presents some views from Jacques Rancière who

claims that this “aestheticization of common life” does not stand in opposition of autonomous art, but instead coexists and covertly supports it. (Ngai, 2015, 20)

The interesting, being an aesthetic category with a style relating to blurring the distinction between aesthetic and work-related production, and moving away from ones affective response to novelty, made it fit well with the changes that came in the 60s in postwar U.S. Which for the interesting was the rise of conceptual art, and it's challenging of the status of art objects. (Ngai, 2015, 21) Further, with the interesting being an aesthetic that elevates it's “frivolity” and “ineffectuality,” this means it is fundamentally a non-theological aesthetic, differing it from aesthetics such as the sublime. This means that it is unable of creating theological awe, and removes it from the discourse of a form of spiritual transcendence through art, referred to by Adorno as the “self-exaltation of art as the absolute.” (Ngai, 2015, 22) What this tells us about the aesthetic category of the interesting, as it is neither a purely positive or judgement, which is that to put something under the category of the interesting does not mean that you are idealising or revering it. (Ngai, 2015, 23) The triviality and “weakness” of the interesting tells us that the interesting is never itself inherently interesting, but only interesting in comparison with something else, the interesting is never stable or permanent. (Ngai, 2015, 25) This returns us to the process of circulation mentioned earlier, as the interesting is both balanced and unbalanced, as what is at one moment judged to be interesting, can quickly be put aside in favour of something else that is interesting, which then in turn becomes the same as what went before, being put aside, as the interesting is based on a feeling, a feeling of interest, a very indeterminate feeling. (Ngai, 2015, 26)

Ngai presents the interesting as not just a form of subjective, feelings based judgement, but also as a form of formal style, stating that “it is impossible to grasp the full cultural significance of any aesthetic category without considering how its functions as judgement and as style relate to each other. The interesting as an aesthetic category is not too involved with “exotic philosophical abstractions,” but instead it plays a part in the texture of everyday social life, central to the everyday common vocabulary used for sharing aesthetic experiences. (Ngai, 2015, 29) The form of the interesting, (form to be understood as mental activity, not as an objective thing, or as the mental activity of forming concepts,) is “anticipatory, as well as

ongoing or serial,” as it always points toward something not yet realized. So the form of the interesting is a temporal form, and a “diachronic” form. (Ngai, 2015, 30) The style of the interesting, could be useful for studying aesthetic culture as a “way of life”, as a style based on common and everyday social aspects. With this “everydayness” of the interesting, its style can be seen as a style of selection, the interesting becomes a tool for selecting through a stylistic proliferation, creating an eclectic hybrid that is a visible aspect of the style itself. (Ngai, 2015, 34)

Practice based research

In "Art Practice as Research," Graeme Sullivan presents that “the imaginative and intellectual work undertaken by artists is a form of research”. As an individual, social, and cultural inquiry, visual arts have been outside of the general community debate, as it is often seen as something too obscure and personal to be able to easily be interpreted. Yet still art is known to have great effects on communities, both uniting and dividing them, as at times it is seen as elitist, or just simply misunderstood. Visual art has been included in schools and higher education, but is still commonly seen as not as important as the other programs in education. Because of this, Sullivan sees visual art as “grossly undervalued,” for its scholarly, cultural, and social significance, and as a form of research. (Sullivan, 2010, 11)

The production of visual art can be seen as a form of inquiry into the theories, practices, and contexts that are used by artists, and the places where artists work are filled with critical and creative investigations, that are examples of forms of research grounded in an art practice. Instead of adopting the methods of inquiry commonly used in social sciences, Sullivan aims to find new paths to accomplish similar research goals that are more complimentary to the visual art practice. (Sullivan, 2010, 11) Still the art practice as research follows a rigorous and systematic inquiry, but does so in a way to put more emphasis on the role imagination, and intellect plays in creating new knowledge that has the capacity to transform human understanding. (Sullivan, 2010, 12)

As humans, it is natural for us to use a process as a way of negotiating meaning, “We create to understand,” “we imagine as we come to know.” Through this we classify, organise, compare, and reference information, to fully understand something, and make it fit within our “system of knowledge.” The way visual art can contribute to this, is by its versatility as a form of human understanding, which can be adapted in ways a traditional scientific inquiry can't. (Sullivan, 2010, 65)

My photographic practice

My own photographic practice, is something I in some ways just happened to fall into. The analog plays a large role in my practice, as all photographs that I take for myself, as parts of my own projects, are taken using analog cameras. My main camera is a Leica m5, a fully mechanical analog rangefinder camera, as it is fully mechanical, there are no automatic settings, and no computers telling me how my photograph should be taken. Further, as it is a rangefinder camera, I view the frame of the photograph through a window, and not through the lens, meaning I never truly see what the camera or the lens sees, before the entire process is finished. Along with the camera, I of course need film, I always use a black and white film, to remove the distraction of colour in my images, to instead focus on the shapes, lines, contrasts, and composition in my image. The use of black and white is also a choice taken to show my intention with my photographs, mostly to not present my photographs as objective truths, or frozen moments taken out of time and set aside, we do not view the world in black and white, and as such this photographic image taken in black and white clearly then does not show us an objective image of our world. Lately I have stuck with taking most of my images with a single type of film, Kodak Tri-x 400, a panchromatic film that has great versatility, providing rich blacks and pure whites, and 36 exposures per roll of film. To manipulate the characteristics of this film, I push it from its rated 400 iso, to 1600 iso, which means pushing it two stops of light, leading to enhanced grain and contrast in the images by underexposing, and overdeveloping.

Wandering

Once all the gear is ready and film is loaded, I go out and start the wandering part of my process. Instead of working in a set location such as a studio, working with designing an image through use of models and object, my process includes a form of aimless wandering. This aimless wandering includes going out without any set goal or route, with each turn or road chosen is decided in the moment, without too much thought, attempting to follow a natural flow. With this process, there is a lot more time spent on observing, than is spent on photographing. Whilst wandering and observing, I am looking for something that 'activates' something in me, and inspires something that I can form within the frame of a photograph. When inspiration strikes, I try to take the photograph as quickly as possible, trying to follow my intuition, to try and keep what first struck me about the subject. This means that I also can't spend any time thinking about camera settings, and measuring light, instead working on assumptions, and muscle memory of the workings of my camera, sacrificing the 'perfection' of the image. This also partly comes from the limitation of only having 36 exposures per roll, meaning that each photograph taken has a direct cost, both as in being one out of 36 possible images on your roll, but also a monetary cost.

Developing

Once a roll is finished, it moves onto the next step in the process which is development. I hand develop all of my film myself at home, in my bathroom, using the bathroom sink, and a developing tank. After turning off the lights in my bathroom, it now functions as a makeshift darkroom, as there are no windows, so it is now safe to start the developing process. I first open the film canister using the bottle opener on a multitool, to remove the film from the canister, to prepare it for going onto the spool of the developing tank. After the canister is opened and film removed, the beginning part of the film is cut off. The beginning part of the film usually has a curve in it, leading into a thinner strip, to make it easier to load onto the spool on the camera. This part of the film has been exposed to light as the camera was loaded, and the curve makes it difficult to load onto the developing tank spool, so it is cut off, leaving a flat tip. Once it has been loaded onto the spool, the end of the film roll is also usually cut off, as it hasn't been exposed, and has a piece of tape attaching it to

the canister. The spool with the roll of film on it, is then placed into the tank, and the tank closed, creating a light tight seal, meaning the lights can be turned back on, and the tank is filled with water, at around 20 degrees celsius, starting the pre-wash part of the developing. The developing times of films can vary on several factors, such as film type, chemical type, and how the film was exposed. Often there are publicly available recommended developing times, some printed on the film boxes themselves, others available on the internet under different kinds of documentation, but I find it is always best to adjust these and experiment with them to get the results that you want.

As I mentioned previously, I push my film by two stops, meaning it is underexposed, so to get the results I want, I will have to adjust the developing times, leaving it in the developer for longer. Emptying out the water from the pre wash, the next step is the developer, I use 12ml of Adox Adonal to 300ml of water at 20 degrees celsius again, putting it into the tank and closing the lid. For the first minute, I constantly agitate the chemical by holding the tank, turning it over gently, whilst slightly twisting it, over and over, until the minute is over, after this, the developing chemicals remain in the tank for 13 more minutes, with 10 seconds of agitation every minute. After this the chemicals are emptied out into the sink, as they are safe, but not reusable, and to stop the effect of the developer chemicals still stuck on the film inside the tank, 15ml of Ilford Ilfostop is added with 300ml of water, and again there is a full minute of agitation in the beginning, ending with just another minute of letting it sit in the tank before emptying it out in the sink again. The next step is 30ml of Ilford Rapid fixer with 300ml of water added to the tank, then agitated for the first minute, then continued for 14 minutes with agitation for 10 seconds every minute, and then emptied into the sink. As the film is now fully fixed, it is now safe for it to be exposed, leaving us with the final step of the developing process, which is 15 minutes of washing in running water, to make sure that all traces of chemicals have been removed from the film. During this step, as I do this all in my bathroom, I often start the shower, and let it run for a little while, as the steam and moisture in the air will help against airborne dust particles.



Figure 8. By Author

Scanning and printing

Once the developing and washing process is over, I hang the film strip from a clothes hanger on the frame of my shower, and attach with a clip on the top, and a clip on the bottom as a weight to help it stay straight. The final step before leaving it to dry, is a nice little final touch of the makeshift nature of my darkroom bathroom, as I squeegee the film strip with my fingers, removing leftover water droplets to prevent water spots on the final images. Further as a result of this quite makeshift setup, this where my process moves into a digital one, as the budget, both in a monetary, and in

a space sense, is lacking. Because of this, when it comes to enlargement, I am unable to use an analog enlarging and printing process, as this equipment isn't available to me. Instead the next step in my process is to turn the negatives on the film into digital files, to be able to turn them into positives, and print them. I do this by scanning them, using a Digital camera with a macro lens, in a setup using a tripod, negative holder, and backlight, once again quite makeshift. These images are then uploaded to my computer, and edited very lightly in Lightroom, mainly to adjust the negatives into positives. Finally this leads to the images being printed from these digital files, returning to the physical world, whilst the film negatives are sorted into physical folders and the digital ones into digital folders.



Figure 9. By Author

Selection of images

Ofcourse, not every image taken get printed, though I feel I haven't really seen an image until I've seen it printed, there are some that seem to not "deserve" to be printed. I make this gruesome selection, when browsing through the digitally converted images, and try to feel for what first got my attention when I was in the wandering process, and decided to take the photograph. At times this feeling has been translated through the photographic process, but most often there is something new in this image, that I didn't feel at first. Because of the analog photographic process, quite some time goes between me taking a photograph and me seeing the photograph, especially as I mainly use a rangefinder camera, so I never truly see what the camera lens sees. Still, this difference in experience of the image, seems to not only be a small change in the point of view or expected framing, somehow it seems as many new aspects have been added to the image during the process, that gives a different experience from the experience had when photographing. These images, where even I, the photographer, is surprised when I see the image, are the images that I decide to print, so that I get to fully experience them as physical things, instead of digital images.



Figure 10. By Author

“Interesting Dissensus” process

This process is something that has been developed before this project started, and in a way is something I have just fallen into. What I wanted to do with this project is to raise my own awareness over my own practice, viewing it through the lenses of “aesthetic of interesting” and “dissensus.” Though these are both contemporary aesthetic philosophies, they are not directly intended for photography, and not the use of analog photography in a contemporary context. My goal is to use these concepts and see how they can be applied in a photographic practice, and how they might relate to, and explain part of the practice that already exists.

The choice of analog

David Sax in his writings on analog, puts emphasis on the weaknesses of analog things. Though he writes about a general concept of analog, and most of his examples relate to vinyl records, this weakness of the analog, also applies to analog photography. Sax mentions the analog as “less efficient, more cumbersome, and not necessarily superior,” which are all things that are also true about analog photography. Many parts of the analog photography process can be said to be quite cumbersome, and less efficient than its digital counterpart. The analog process introduces a lot of steps and constraints into the photographic process, such as having to develop your film to be able to see your images, cameras being fully mechanical, meaning all settings have to be thought of and adjusted manually, and between every shot you need to pull the lever to advance the film, before you are able to take the next photograph. And as Sax mentions, the analog isn’t necessarily better than digital, as most of these constraints aren’t seen in digital cameras, and the technology and efficiency of them are advancing further and further every day. Then the question of why you would choose an analog process over a digital one remains. Sax claims that after some time, the weakness of the analog will be seen as its strengths, which we can see as well in analog photography as it becomes a more popular option. Taken into use also by young people, who seem to see the weaknesses of the analog, as a new strength to lead an exploration, similarly to the young people Sax mentions seeing appearing in record stores as the analog started to gain popularity.

Weaknesses becoming strengths can also be seen in the aesthetic of interesting, as these aesthetic categories presented by Sianne Ngai are described as “trivial.” The feeling of interesting is a much weaker feeling than the ones of the beautiful, or the sublime, and do not lead to any action or release. The interesting does not only include the feeling of interesting, but also the feeling of boredom, as you cannot have the feeling of interest, without the feeling of boredom, and the aesthetic of the interesting is based on the conflict between these feelings. Similarly to the story of the analog, this weakness and triviality does not mean that the interesting is useless or pointless, instead it stands central in our understanding of the concept of aesthetic. As the weakness of interesting means, that when you judge something as interesting, you are setting up a judgement that demands justification. The discourse of aesthetics includes not only pleasure and evaluation, but also justification, which can often be lost with other aesthetic judgements that seem like more final statements. An aesthetic category including conflicting feeling, also shows to the social conflict behind it, as compared to aesthetic categories and judgements that focus on singular emotions that don't fully capture the complexity of the aesthetic experience. Ngai claims that ““interesting” is a quality of the object,” could it then be said that the analog is an interesting object? (Jasper, 2011)

“Interests never exist as unique, autonomous impulses, but only in and as their collisions with other interests,” same as in the contemporary context, the analog exists in a collision with the digital, which also is true in photographic images. Most images that are seen in our everyday are digital images, and it is in this context where the analog images collide with the digital and stand out as interesting, precisely for being an analog object. The judgement of something as interesting is only the beginning of something being interesting, “our experience of something as interesting compels us to immediately talk about it. As if there could be no aesthetic experience of the interesting without the talk.” Simply stating the analog object as an interesting object, thus invites discursivity, because of the weakness of aesthetic, something that might not appear from a digital image, as this initial judgement of it being interesting through using an interesting object, is lost.

The dissensus seems to share some qualities with the interesting, which helps with this creation of an “interesting dissensus” process. As we see with the interesting, with the analog being something that goes against the established norm, this can also be applied through the aesthetic Regime presented by Ranciere. As we see today's digital world, running on instant gratification and constantly evolving new technology, going everyday being overloaded with digital images wherever you are. The images we see here are often within the representative regime, imitations of our lives, created for our communities. In this world, deciding to go against “reason,” by choosing the less effective, less advanced, slow, and fragile, analog photographic process, going against the consensual sense. (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 45) With this, the analog begins to move into the aesthetic regime, and further does so by activating the imagination, (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 47) as an interesting object, the analog activates the imagination by inviting you to talk about it, as it has been judged as interesting, this must be justified, which activates the imagination. This activation of imagination, also relates to the change in aesthetic expectations that come with the analog, as our visual experience has changed in modern times, with digital images and social media, when the concept of analog is introduced, our expectations might also change, and the visual experience of printed analog images, also affects this. The effect the analog photographic process has on the aesthetic expectation, comes from the weaknesses of the analog, that make it a “human centric” tool, (Sax, 2017, 17) moving our expectation away from what we usually expect from our never ending supply of digital images.

Application of “Interesting Dissensus” in my photographic practice

As this project will finalise as an art exhibition, I will now present some of my images, where i have applied the “Interesting Dissensus” to my analog photographic practice. The intention of these, are not to be presented as direct perfect renditions of dissensus and interesting aesthetics, as these are quite abstract and broad concepts, but instead to present a process and practice where these concepts have been inserted. As a way of understanding the practice, to increase consciousness over the process itself, and all the concepts that it touches, and that touches it. As the theory helps with understanding the practice, the practice further helps

understanding the theory, and helps develop it further into new concepts. The wandering process, is what helped to further understand the feeling of the interesting, at first, this feeling that would appear during the wandering was just an unnamed call to action, that wasn't particularly strong or demanding. This feeling, was the feeling of interest, Sontag said that “the practice of photography is now identified with the idea that everything in the world could be made interesting through the camera.” and that it is “not altogether wrong to say that there is no such thing as a bad photograph—only less interesting [ones],” (Jasper, 2011) then by following these fleeting feelings of interest, there is the potential to find interest in anything out there as you wander.



Figure 11. By Author

The dissensual is something that is more difficult to hunt, as there is the danger of falling into the “avant garde” when attempting to directly create dissensus. (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 45) Instead, what is to be understood from the dissensus, is how it can play a subconscious role in the process. Perhaps these feelings that appear as the image is being viewed at the end of the process, are the results on the dissensual effects on the aesthetic experience. (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 45) This can be things in the photograph that perhaps you never noticed at the time of taking

the photograph, but they could also be things that have happened to the image as it has gone through this process. Often the ones I notice with analog images is the rendering of the grain, how it affects the darker areas of the image, or the contrast and characteristics of the film. At times parts of the analog process goes wrong as well, or maybe just “wrong,” as an image does not have to be recognised as art to be a dissensual aesthetic image. (Durden & Tormey, 2021, 46) These can also often be seen when viewing the negatives themselves, often i go through my folder of negatives and notice maybe an accidental fingerprint or a slight dent on the negatives.



Figure 12. By Author

The images presented in this exhibition consist of three series of images, with two images in each series. What connect these images in their series, is their time and place in the extended process of this project. They represent three different points in my process, though these are not any specific points, or directly related to any specific developments in my understanding. The images in the same series, both came from the same roll of film, and the ones in the next series, from another roll of film. Though I am not certain of any specific, or obvious visual changes in my work as a result of this process, as it was never really expected. The interesting, and dissensus, are both formless aesthetics, there are no specific visual quirks or

aesthetic rules to obey. The process is also in fact far from finished, it may never finish.



Figure 13. By Author

As this is an arts practice based research project as well, the discoveries I have made aren't necessarily any objective truths, as with the aesthetic of interesting, the project is based on my thoughts and feelings, it is fully subjective. The same is my choice of the analog, there are no objective claims that prove the analog to be superior to the digital, both in photography and in general. But the exploration of these concepts, has allowed me to further dwell into this, about why I have taken this

choice, what this choice can mean to me, and how I can further explore this through my artistic practice.



Figure 14. By Author

Conclusion

In conclusion, the revenge of the analog seems to have gone from an ember to a blazing fire, and has seen a lot of interest in the landscape of contemporary art photography. The especially surprising part about this, is that these artists don't seem to be using analog photography for purely nostalgic reasons, or for a simple refusal of switching. Instead these artists are at times even young enough to never have experienced an analog camera until now, and I happen to be one of the people in that position. What I discovered by exploring deeper into the analog as a concept, is that this new return of the analog, seems to be a cultural reaction. Though analog things have all been replaced by cheaper, more effective options, many still seem to return to an analog medium, whether it's for listening to music, taking notes, or photographing. To explore this in more relevance to contemporary art, I turned to aesthetic theory, to see if it could be used as a lens for viewing the analog, and if it could improve my understanding of it, myself, and my artistic practice. The three regimes of images, presented the aesthetic as being formless and medium less, and instead existing as dissensus, when it entered conflict with the representative or ethical regimes. The aesthetic of interesting did live up to it's name and introduced an interest to the analog. An aesthetic that also was formless, and showed another conflict or collision, yet was open about its weakness, the same weakness that seemed to attract people to the analog. By combining these into a "Interesting Dissensus" concept, that can be used as a process or method, for analysing and understanding my analog photographic practice. Though I have only used it for myself in this project, I believe it can function as a framework for others to do similar explorations through aesthetics.



Figure 15. By Author



Figure 16. By Author

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