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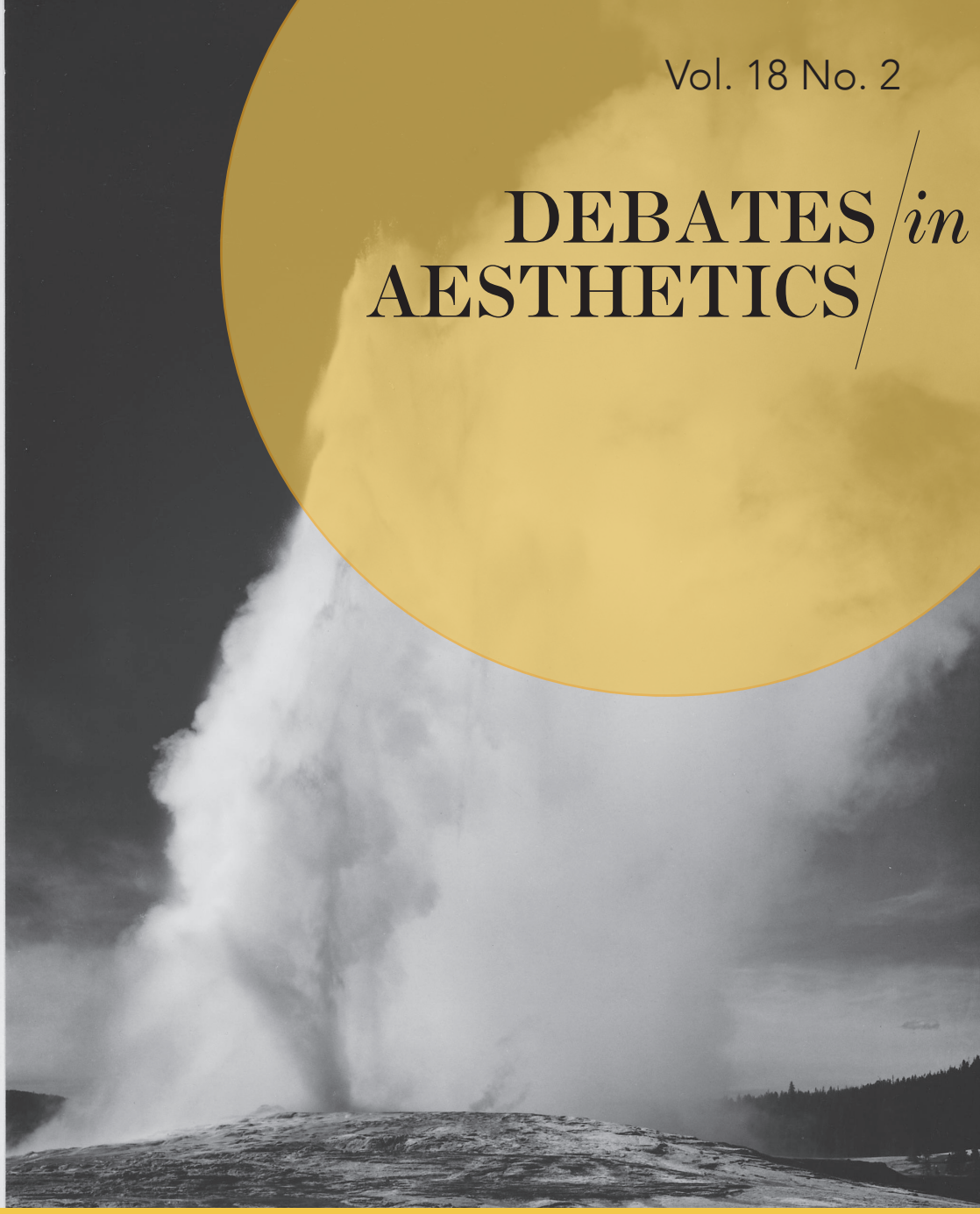

Debates in Aesthetics is a peer-reviewed, open-access journal for articles, interviews and book reviews. The journal's principal aim is to provide the philosophical community with a dedicated venue for debate in aesthetics and the philosophy of art.

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Contact
www.debatesinaesthetics.org
editor@debatesinaesthetics.org

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INTRODUCTION

Claire Anscomb

It is my great pleasure to introduce the 2024 special issue of *Debates in Aesthetics*. This issue seeks to advance lively debates about how we should understand and appreciate photographic practices and their products. To this end, original contributions were solicited from the philosophical community in addition to responses to a target article, written by Dawn M. Wilson. Wilson's article examines Ansel Adams's music-photography analogy to tease out a more refined version of the analogy and advance the "multi-stage" view that she has been developing over the course of her theorizing about photography. Three responses (Campion, Giupponi, and Pettersson) to the target article have been published here alongside a reply by Wilson. Also featured are two original research articles that tackle topics from luck-based sceptical arguments regarding the artistic status of photography (Star) to the epistemic merits of photography (Schreier). Despite their different approaches, in common to all the articles published in this issue is a sincere interest in the testimony of practitioners and a close attention to their processes and the material circumstances in which they practice. The results are a nuanced set of discussions that I hope will help to progress debates in this, and related, areas of philosophical aesthetics.[1]

Wilson's target article takes the photographer's music-photography analogy seriously. According to Adam's analogy, "a negative produced by photographic 'visualization' is analogous to a score produced by musical composition" (Wilson 2024, 14) and prints are like performances, which may have different appreciable qualities — further variability of which may come from different individuals reinterpreting a negative.

1 I would also like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the reviewers of these articles, whose contributions furthered the aims of this issue.

For Adams, visualization, where a photographer anticipates a finished image with certain values, textures, and arrangements, is necessary for the creative expressive work of fine art photography. While Wilson finds the analogy compelling, she proposes that it is limited by the single-stage account of photography, that is seemingly assumed by Adams, whereby it is supposed "that a photographic image has been generated once a camera exposure has occurred." (Wilson 2024, 14-15) Anticipating other discussions in this issue, Wilson highlights that "aesthetic scepticism and epistemic dogmatism can be traced to the single-stage view of photography, which supposes that a photograph is fundamentally mind-independent because it is autonomously created". (2024, 15) However, according to the multi-stage view, the exposure stage only produces a photographic 'register', which requires subsequent rendering to generate a photographic image. It is thus the register that Wilson proposes is analogous to the written score, and is used to create the negative, which is a one-time performance that can be used to generate 'expressive performances'. Resultantly, while there are distinct stages, Wilson proposes that creativity in these practices is extended and interdependent, inviting the idea "that someone appreciating fine art photography can critically appraise not just the print, but also the 'visualization' expressively realized in the print." (2024, 27)

Significantly, through the revised analogy, Wilson respects the testimonies of practitioners but balances this with consideration for the ambiguities or inconsistencies they may contain. This is an admirable approach that aims to promote new ways of thinking about the creation and appreciation of art photography (Wilson 2024, 15). Nevertheless, we might posit, as Lopes has (2014, 158), that sometimes we profit from appreciating certain arts in ways that are not true to the kind.[2] Furthermore, as Wilson herself highlights, all this plays out "within a negative-positive paradigm" (2024, 39) and it would be intriguing to consider

2 Lopes, Dominic McIver, *Beyond Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

how a multi-stage view would account for the expressive potential of less common or 'alternative' photographic practices where there are no negatives, as in the direct-positive process used to produce daguerreotypes, for example. Perhaps one approach lies in the forward-looking nature of the account offered here. Images that have ostensibly existed as unique entities, like daguerreotypes, can now be easily scanned or digitally photographed and 'reinterpreted' using digital contact film in the darkroom or various computer-based means to produce new digital prints. Indeed, as Wilson has suggested, the "true spirit of the analogy emerges" (2024, 39) if we look to photo-electrical technologies like a digital RAW file, the equivalent, Wilson proposes, to an exposed but undeveloped film, or "a score that can be performed unlimited times." (2024, 39)

Taking up themes related to the digital, Campion responds to Wilson's article by examining the recent phenomenon of 'videogame photography', or static images produced from videogames. This way of producing images, Campion proposes, has affinities with the multi-stage account of the photographic process as graphical information, which is usually output directly to the screen connected to the system, is processed so the system reads it as an image file (2024, 59). Nonetheless, given that no photographic event involving light is involved in making the images, Campion concludes that videogame photography would be inadmissible as a "proper form of photography on Wilson's multi-stage account" but that this "seems to challenge the harmony the account has enjoyed with photographic practice" (2024, 60). Although Campion takes this to be a tension in the account, as Wilson writes in her reply: "When Ansel Adams tells us that his prints are musical performances, his claim should be taken seriously because it provides insight into his art practice, but it does not justify redefining the ontological category of musical performances." (Wilson 2024, 114) In this case, some harmony with practice could be maintained by taking the claims of practitioners seriously and appreciating static images from videogames *as* photographs

without thereby designating them as such. In doing so, we are arguably still in the position to grapple with the important distinctions Campion highlights (2024, 62) — between the real and virtual within photography — without having to radically revise ontologies.

Giupponi's response to Wilson's target article also looks to another art, namely Renaissance practices of intarsia, where small pieces of wood are combined to form an image. As Giupponi outlines (2024, 68), the works were often designed by painters, who made the preparatory drawing, and executed in wood by specialized carpenters, *intarsiatori*. The practice is one that has often been dismissed, as Giupponi explains, as either a sub-genre of painting or a craft (2024, 68). Underpinning these sceptical attitudes, Giupponi proposes, is that intarsia is treated as a single-stage endeavour (2024, 68). Accordingly, Giupponi looks to Wilson's multi-stage account as a model upon which to highlight the distinctive, yet interdependent creative achievements of the artist responsible for producing the preparatory drawing and the *intarsiatore*. In her reply, Wilson praises Guipponi for delivering the kind of outcome she hoped to achieve: "a better understanding of creative achievements and assignment of credit to practitioners who are otherwise overlooked." (2024, 115) In general, the visual arts, unlike music, are ill-equipped to recognize or credit the variety of figures who may have made important contributions to the manifestation of an artwork. However, the kind of approach advocated by Wilson has the potential to facilitate new attitudes that could help to change this. Although, as Wilson also indicates in her reply to Giupponi, the degree to which the arguments in service of this are successful is likely to be dependent on interrogating other implicit or stubborn conceptions, like sharp distinctions made between art and craft (2024, 115).

Pettersson directly takes up Wilson's challenge "to expand the music-photography analogy in several directions" (2024, 39) by considering the analogies of silence in music and darkness in photography,

and covers or versions in music and photography. Highlighting the distinction between a recording of an absence and an absence of a recording, Pettersson suggests that light is not necessary for producing a photograph. Should a photosensitized surface be exposed in the dark, then "the production of the envisioned absolutely dark photo is still *sensitive* to light: had light been in the scene, it would have shown up in the photo." (Pettersson 2024, 89) This helpfully prompts Wilson to clarify in her reply that photography is concerned to register "the presence and absence of light, typically as a differentiated pattern, during some specific time interval" (2024, 103) which also depends on other material circumstances of the event.

Considering covers in music, Pettersson questions: "what constraints could plausibly govern the rendering, so that it is still a rendering of the register." (2024, 91) For a response, Pettersson turns to the informational account of another advocate of a multi-stage view. According to Lopes: 'A photograph is an image rendered by making marks based on input from a recording of information about a light scene." (2016, 87)[3] From Lopes's approach, Pettersson again questions "How much, and what kind of guidance is needed for an image to be a rendering of a register?" (2024, 91) Pettersson makes the challenge concrete by looking to Diarmuid Costello's imaginary case of a work made by Gerhard Richter, where the artist drags solvent across the wet surface of a painting made by tracing a photographic image of the Kölner Dom projected on the canvas. Questioning whether the "envisioned photograph" is "*of* the Kölner Dom", Pettersson suggests that just as similarity is used to settle lawsuits in music cases where it is alleged that one song originated in another, "the 'way out' of the possible impasse is to think of photographs necessarily involving capturing the 'looks' of things" (2024, 92). However, questions, Wilson suggests, about the authenticity of a rendering are perhaps beside the point: "There can never be any

3 Lopes, Dominic McIver, *Four Arts of Photography: An Essay in Philosophy* (Oxford: Wiley, 2016).

rendering from a register that is identical with a 'photograph' created during exposure, no matter what its visible properties' (2024, 108-109). As Wilson advocates, the multi-stage account allows for enormous diversity across cases: "even when a photographic event has occurred, evidence of that aetiology would only be salient in the final product to a greater of lesser degree" (2024, 40). Returning to the case under discussion, given the way the paint is ultimately manipulated, the imaginary work, which could be considered a hybrid between photography and painting, is not an image that preserves the informational relation to a high degree.[4] However, this in combination with the fact it is not, from visual observation, obviously *of* the Kölner Dom would arguably be a source of its artistic significance.

In his article, Star draws on a work of art history, Robin Kelsey's *Photography and the Art of Chance* (2015), to suggest that the main source of doubt about the artistic pretensions of photography is not the familiar brand of Scrutonian scepticism. Rather, photographs may be the product of luck, leaving photographers deserving little or no aesthetic credit for their work. Star addresses this concern by attending to different kinds of luck — *circumstantial luck* and *resultant luck* — and argues that, to different degrees, both are compatible with photographic activities being skilful and artistically creditworthy. In building this argument, like Wilson, Star is keen to stress that photography should not be reduced to the moment of exposure and that the testimony of photographers may not always be that accurate or informative about broader practices. In relation to epistemological issues, Star proposes that "it is important to distinguish between artistic credit in relation to single photographs and artistic credit in relation to an *oeuvre*" (2024, 141) — with the latter we can determine whether photographs have

4 For more on the concept of 'hybrid arts' see: Anscomb, Claire, 'Hybridized, Influenced, or Evolved? A Typology to Aid the Categorization of New and Developing Arts', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* (2023) 81:3, 317-329. https://doi.org/10.1093/jaac/kpad028

been taken skilfully, something which may be corroborated by external evidence. As Star questions, "why should we not be able to infer that a particular photograph is a creditworthy work of art from facts external to the content of that particular photo?" (2024, 140) Indeed, considering that contextual information helps to anchor interpretive activity in relation to a variety of visual artworks (for further discussion on this see, for example, Maes 2010 and Bantinaki 2020), it would seem arbitrary to prohibit this activity in relation to photographic work.[5]

In the final article, Schreier questions the epistemic status of photography by looking at a variety of different photographic practices. As Schreier finds, they have different standards and so "we need additional sources of knowledge to justify using an image to warrant true beliefs" (2024, 155). In some practices, where visual information is added, the epistemic merits of the images are increased but this, Schreier points out, is "explained by the epistemic virtue of trained judgement" (2024, 155). Given that, as Schreier outlines, now many photographic processes are digital, as in those conducted through smartphones where images may be processed by, or edited with, algorithms that give "a more mind-dependent representation of the scene" (2024, 155), we arguably need to do more to encourage this epistemic virtue not only in knowledge-oriented practices, but to guide our everyday interactions with the world via the deluge of such images through which we seem to encounter it. Moreover, with the recent explosion in AI-generated images that appear photographic, perhaps now more than ever, we need to be willing to embrace external information, not only in our appreciative practices, but to verify whether images are reliable sources of visual information.

5 Maes, Hans, 'Intention, Interpretation, and Contemporary Visual Art', *The British Journal of Aesthetics* (2010) 50:2, 121-138. https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/ayp051; Bantinaki, Katerina, 'The literary translator as author: A philosophical assessment of the idea', *Translation Studies* (2020) 13:3, 306-317. https://doi.org/10.1080/14781700.2019.1668841

MUSIC, VISUALIZATION AND THE MULTI-STAGE ACCOUNT OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Dawn M. Wilson
University of Hull

Like his contemporary, Edward Weston, Ansel Adams claimed that visualization is essential for creating fine art photography. But, unlike Weston, he believed that a print from a negative is like a performance from a score. In his analogy, a photographer's visualization is like a musician's composition: once it has been set down in a 'score', it can be expressively rendered by different performers, making it possible to create and critically appreciate 'performances' with different qualities. I argue that this music-photography analogy makes Adams's conception of photographic visualization more fruitful than Weston's alternative. However, while I agree with Adams that a print is analogous to a performance, I criticize his idea that a negative is like a score. I argue that he holds a traditional, single-stage conception of photography, which led him to overlook a key distinction between undeveloped film and the developed negative. The multi-stage account of photography that I defend not only remedies this problem but also shows how Adams's proposal can be fully realized in digital photography. Most significantly, it invites theorists and practitioners to expand the music-photography analogy by considering wider varieties of music—not only performances from a score.

1 Introduction

The photographer Ansel Adams was a classically trained pianist who proposed an analogy between fine art photography and classical music. In his analogy, a photographic negative is like a musical score, and prints are like performances. A negative produced by photographic 'visualization' is analogous to a score produced by musical composition. The negative can be interpreted in different ways during the printing process, resulting in prints with appreciably different qualities, like different musical performances. A composer's score can be reinterpreted by many different performers. Likewise, although the photographer who created the negative may create their own prints, other artists can reinterpret the negative and print it differently.

I find this music-photography analogy compelling, though I will recommend modifications. I suggest that full benefit from the analogy can be obtained through a multi-stage account of photography rather than the single-stage account assumed by Adams. While Adams is right that a print is like a performance, his idea that a negative is a score is imperfect. When he frames the analogy, he does not incorporate a key distinction between undeveloped film and the developed negative.[1] He is led to this conflation because he holds a traditional, single-stage account of photography. Correctively applying a multi-stage account will separate the conflated process stages and deliver a coherent and enlightening version of the analogy.

The multi-stage account of photography opposes the orthodoxy of single-stage accounts in the history, theory, and philosophy of photography (Phillips 2009a; 2009b; and Wilson 2013).[2] Single-stage views suppose

1 He does, of course, recognize the technical difference, and his books describe the science of the development process in exceptional detail. My point is that he conceptually equivocates between two different process stages when he frames his music-photography analogy.

2 See Costello (2017) for a detailed analysis and critical comparison of orthodox and new theories.

that a photographic image has been generated once a camera exposure has occurred. A multi-stage view holds that an exposure occurring during a photographic event only produces a photographic 'register', which is not an image, and that subsequent rendering of the registered information is necessary before any photographic image is generated (Wilson 2021; 2022).

Elsewhere, I have argued that intractable problems of aesthetic scepticism and epistemic dogmatism can be traced to the single-stage view of photography, which supposes that a photograph is fundamentally mind-independent because it is autonomously created (Phillips 2009b). The multi-stage account counters that dominant view and unlocks both types of problems by demonstrating that mind-independence is not a fundamental characteristic of a photograph (Phillips 2009b; Wilson 2022). Philosophers have developed versions of the multi-stage view to discuss photographic art (Lopes 2016) and fiction (Atencia Linares 2012). In computational aesthetics, the multi-stage account has significance for understanding photographic imagery and photographic imagination in computer vision, machine learning, and AI systems (Chávez Heras & Blanke 2020). It also has relevance for discussions of computer-generated art (Pan 2020), including 'Deepfakes' (Carlson 2021).

I am grateful to the editors for an invitation to say more about the new theory in relation to art and aesthetics. I have previously argued that a merely causal relation to photographed objects does not by itself determine the pictorial subject of a photograph (Phillips 2009a); that photography presents distinctive opportunities for the exercise of artistic intentionality (Wilson 2012; 2022); and that the 'photographic event' provides a basis for aesthetic interest in the causal provenance of a photographic image (Phillips 2008; Wilson 2013). My aim in this paper is to show that the multi-stage view promotes new ways of thinking about the creation and appreciation of art photography, applicable retrospec-

tively as well as in the future.[3]

2 Photographers and Philosophers on 'Visualization'

Ansel Adams argued that there is a fundamental distinction between functional photography and fine art photography, which he also calls 'creative' or 'expressive' photography. In his view, technical craft is important in all photography, but fine art photography requires more than an excellent standard of fundamental craft techniques. It also requires 'creative-intuitive' achievement: "The creative-intuitive forces must dominate from the start in all expressive work. If not, the whole concept of photography as a creative medium would be invalid." (Schaefer 1999, 131)[4] While his claim about expressive work could apply to fine art in general, Adams makes a specific claim about photography: expressive work in photography is impossible without 'visualization'.[5]

> The term visualization refers to the entire emotional-mental process of creating a photograph, [...]. It includes the ability to anticipate a finished image before making the exposure, so that the procedures employed will contribute to achieving the desired result. (Adams 2003a, 1)

Visualization is, for Adams, the most important aspect of art practice. Everything else – subject selection, image management, negative development, and print production – is subordinate (Adams 2003b, 2). He describes visualization variously in interviews and his writings, including his technical manuals, but the idea is particularly compelling when he elaborates on 'visualization' through an analogy with music.

3 Dominic Lopes (2008) has argued that holding an incorrect conception of photography may entail that all our aesthetic appraisals to date are wrong. A new conception of photography may make new and correct appraisal of photography possible.

4 Relatedly see Adams (2003b, 5-6).

5 It is necessary, but not sufficient. He acknowledges that visualization can be part of functional photography. His point is that creative expression is not possible without visualization, not that visualization on its own delivers art.

> Visualization of the final picture is essential in whatever medium is used. The term seeing can be used for visualization, but the latter term is more precise in that it relates to the final picture – its scale, composition, tonal and textural values, etc. Just as a musician 'hears' notes and chords in his mind's ear, so can the trained photographer 'see' certain values, textures and arrangements in his mind's eye. (Schaefer 1999, 131)

Adams trained as a classical pianist and pursued a dual career in music and photography until he finally chose photography. He was obliged to justify the status of his work against an art market that was hostile to the notion of fine art photography. He believed, justifiably, that critics were either willing to appreciate the technical craft of photography or to value Pictorialist photography that imitated the artistic effects characteristic of painting. There was little willingness to appraise the artistic achievements distinctive to photography as a creative medium. His task, in his art, mentoring, and writing, was to demonstrate the importance of visualization for the creation and appraisal of fine art photography.[6]

Several of his contemporaries, particularly fellow members of the f.64 'Straight Photography' group, shared Adams's view that visualization, sometimes called 'pre-visualization', constitutes an essential require-

6 Rather than invent the term 'visualization', might it be best to adopt the term 'composition', as it is already a familiar term in photography? No, the distinction between composition and visualization is significant. Principles of pictorial composition were first established in painting and graphic arts. Accordingly, composition in photography describes a process of selection, governing the formal arrangement of elements inside the frame, such as the position of objects, their shapes, colours, and relative sizes. A photographer is said to compose the photograph before pressing the shutter, and a photographic image can be described as well composed, or poorly composed, as when a family group has their feet cut off. Composition is a feature of all photography, not specific to fine art photography. In this sense composition is merely one aspect of visualization. To discuss art photography, 'visualization' is a more precise term which best fits an analogy with 'composition' in music.

ment of fine art photography.[7] Edward Weston wrote:

> Since the recording process is instantaneous, and the nature of the image such that it cannot survive corrective handiwork, it is obvious that the *finished print must be created in full before the film is exposed*. Until the photographer has learned to visualize his final result in advance, and to predetermine the procedures necessary to carry out that visualization, his finished work (if it be photography at all) will present a series of lucky – or unlucky – mechanical accidents. (Weston 1943, 172 – emphasis in the original)

Despite explicit statements of artistic intent and first-hand accounts of artistic technique, some philosophers have remained sceptical about photographers describing visualization. While fully accepting that photographers make extensive claims about their intent during the photographic process, strict theoretical commitments have licenced philosophers to deny that it is possible for intentionality to genuinely permeate the causal-mechanical process.[8] Visualization, sceptical philosophers can argue, describes a style of working distinctive to some photographers, but it does not alter the essentially mind-independent nature of photographs.

My counterargument has two aspects. First, methodologically, I claim that the perspective and knowledgeable testimony of photographers counts for more than philosophers have recognized.[9] Second, theoretically, I claim that rejecting the single-stage account and accepting

7 Weston presented the concept that he would later call pre-visualization as early as 1922. Adams came to the idea independently and was the first to publish a definition of visualization, in 1934 (Alinder 2014, 53).

8 This view is most prominently argued by Roger Scruton (1981). Michael Morris on the other hand rejects sceptical arguments that rely on a zero-sum relation between mind-independent mechanical factors and intentionality (2020, p. 112). See also Costello and Phillips (2009).

9 See Wilson (2012, 56, 63-65). Also, Wilson (2022).

a multi-stage account removes the default philosophical idea that appears to justify scepticism – the idea that a photograph is inherently mind-independent, so intentionality can only be extraneous. Instead, the multi-stage account replaces it with the idea that intentionality can play an integral role in the photographic process. Theoretical commitment to the multi-stage account reinforces my methodological approach: when it is accepted that intentionality can play an integral role in the photographic process, photographers' testimony describing visualization carries more weight. Philosophical aesthetics stands to benefit if this theory and method are extended to other cases where photographers describe their art practice.

Taking seriously photographers' testimony and perspectives does not mean uncritically accepting every claim—not least because photographers disagree with one another. Not all photographers are proponents of visualization, and not all proponents of visualization support the music-photography analogy. Weston, for example, is committed to visualization but does not support the analogy with music.[10] Philosophers can critically evaluate specific claims and propose alternatives. In my case, I will argue that the music-photography analogy makes Adams's concept of visualization more fruitful than Weston's concept of pre-visualization. Adams and Weston both assume a single-stage account of photography, which leads to problems in their theoretical positions. But once revised in accordance with a multi-stage account, the music-photography analogy delivers creative and critical benefits and best accommodates the wide range of innovative practices found in digital photography.

10 Three photographers surnamed 'Weston' appear in this discussion. I refer to Edward Weston as 'Weston' and include forenames when referring to his sons, Brett and Cole.

3 The Music-Photography Analogy

For Adams, the main point of the music-photography analogy is to afford photographic visualization a status similar to musical composition.[11] By claiming that a photographer is like a composer, Adams argues that creative photography can be appraised as fine art. He works through further implications of this analogy, starting with the idea that a composer of classical music produces a written score, which can then be performed. The equivalent stage of the photographic process, the production of a negative, is a creative achievement that requires personal vision informed by technical skill.

> The key to the satisfactory application of visualization lies in getting the appropriate information onto the negative. This can be compared to the writing of a musical score. (Adams 2002, x)

Adams claims that, in photography, the negative is the score, and prints are performances.

> The negative is similar to a musician's score, and the print to the performance of that score. The negative comes to life only when 'performed' as a print. (Adams 2003b, 2)

> The print is our opportunity to interpret and express the negative's information in reference to the original visualization as well as our current concept of the desired final image. We start with the negative as the point of departure in creating the print, and then proceed through a series of 'work' prints to our ultimate objective, the 'fine print'. (Adams 2003b, 3)[12]

11 Which is not to substantively claim that music and photography are alike in all, or even many, respects. The analogy is heuristic: it presents and explores an idea.

12 'Work prints' are analogous to rehearsal performances, where an interpretation can be worked out and practised before the final recital, or 'fine print'.

> I consider the making of a print a subtle, and sometimes difficult, 'performance' of the negative! (Adams 2003b, 127)

The next implication of the analogy is that the production of a print from a negative is a distinctive kind of creative achievement that merits its own appraisal. A classical musician does not merely carry out a performance, but actively creates a performance:

> The point I wish to emphasize is the dual nature of printing: it is both a carrying-to-completion of the visualized image and a fresh creative activity in itself. (Adams 2003b, 9)

> The creativity of the printing process is distinctly similar to the creativity of exposing negatives: in both cases we start with conditions that are 'given', and we strive to appreciate and interpret them. In printing we accept the negative as a starting point that determines much, but not all, of the character of the final image. (Adams 2003b, 1)

> The emotionally satisfying print values are almost never direct transcriptions of the negative values. [...] When you are making a fine print you are creating, as well as re-creating. (Adams 2003b, 5)

This leads to the idea that, like performances, different prints can vary in their appreciable qualities.

> We know that musicianship is not merely rendering the notes accurately, but performing them with the appropriate sensitivity and imaginative communication. The performance of a piece of music, like the printing of a negative, may be of great variety and yet retain the essential concepts. (Adams 2002, x)

And, finally, the analogy grants that performances of the photographer's 'score' may include reinterpretations created by different artists, also allowing the use of new techniques and technology. Writing towards the end of his life, Adams was willing to embrace this idea:

> Photographers are, in a sense, composers and the negatives are their scores. They first perform their own works, but I see no reason why they should not be available for others to perform. In the electronic age, I am sure that scanning techniques will be developed to achieve prints of extraordinary subtlety from the original negative scores. If I could return in twenty years or so I would hope to see astounding interpretations of my most expressive images. (Adams 1985, 305)

This personal reflection comes years after a thought-provoking episode in Adams' art practice. When he published *Portfolio VI*, his publisher convinced him to limit his print run by destroying his original negatives. Deliberate destruction was a fairly common practice for photographers seeking to increase the selling price of their work. Adams, however, expressed remorse and regarded it as further evidence that the art market was at odds with the true nature of the medium:

> Photography is a medium that theoretically allows unlimited printing from the negative; negatives should never be intentionally destroyed. I cannot accept the value of artificially produced scarcity as more important than the value of creative production. (Adams 1985, 306).

Whereas Adams resolved to preserve his negatives as a collection of scores that could be performed by others, the photographer Brett Weston took a different stance. He claimed that it was only possible to retain the necessary 'excitement' of his work by developing and print-

ing straight away.[13] When that state of mind had gone, he lacked the necessary 'enthusiasm' to return to his old negatives and, as the 'mood' required was 'too personal' for another person to grasp, Weston concluded that "No-one can print another photographer's negatives" (1980). On his 80th birthday in 1991, he ceremonially burnt thousands of his negatives.[14]

4 Creating and Appreciating Fine Art Photography

While the claim that a negative is analogous to a score and a print is analogous to a performance might sound to a philosopher like the start of an attempt to specify constitutive identity conditions of a photographic artwork, this would miss the point. The purpose of this music-photography analogy is to explicate the creative process that a photographer undertakes, the artistic achievements required at various stages, and the scope for interpretative contributions by different artists. The analogy is helpful for understanding photography as a creative medium and, interrelatedly, for critically appreciating the qualities of photographic art. However, it does not aim to deliver the kinds of ontological distinctions that philosophers are inclined to prioritize. [15] Adams is not asking: What is the artwork? What is the art object? What are its identity conditions or persistence conditions? Rather, he is concerned with how fine art photography can be created and how it should be appraised—not how it is ontologically constituted. My discussion

13 'Excitement', like 'enthusiasm' and 'mood', can be understood here as a characteristic of 'visualization'.

14 Brett Weston was the eldest son of Edward Weston. His conclusion was somewhat surprising because he was a renowned printmaker of fine prints from his father's negatives. Ultimately, his stance is consistent with his art practice; he chose to hand over that printmaking role to his younger brother, Cole, and concentrate on his own art photography.

15 Aaron Ridley (2004, 13) argues that ontological commitments are not the most helpful starting point to discuss music. He recommends adopting a 'baggy musical ontology' that doesn't foreclose interesting questions.

here is in the same spirit.[16] In this section I explore the merits of the music-photography analogy as Adams envisaged it. In the following section I will raise some difficulties that need to be addressed to obtain full benefit from the analogy and note some surprising consequences.

4. 1 Creative Achievement

The art of classical music is not the creation of a written score, plus a performance. It is the creation of a composition, which is manifested in a written score, and in performances from the score where aesthetic qualities of both the performance and the composition can be appreciated. By analogy, the fine art photography that Adams championed is not the creation of a negative and a print. It is the creation of a visualization, which is first manifested in a negative, and fine prints from the negative in which aesthetic qualities of both the print and the visualization can be appreciated. For Adams, a fine art photograph is not merely a print from a negative—it is an 'expression' of the photographer's visualization.

> For me, a photograph begins as the visualization of the image which represents the excitement and perception of that moment and situation. The print represents excitement, perception and expression (performance). (Adams 1985, 271)

To understand Adams's idea, I find it helpful to think of 'expression' as expressive rendering, where 'rendering' gives the print its tangible substance and appearance, thereby contributing properties to the visual image. Comparably, a musical performance could be considered the

16 For this reason, I am not here engaging with philosophical discussions of photography and music that focus on Goodman's autographic/allographic distinction, or the identity conditions of photographic artworks.

expressive rendering of a composition.[17]

As with musical composition, visualization needs to be understood as one kind of artistic achievement within an extended and interdependent creative process. Visualization is visualization of the final expression. Expression is expressive rendering of an initial visualization. But visualization of an expression and expression of a visualization are different kinds of artistic achievement. In music, the general term 'musician' can be sub-divided into distinct types of creative contribution and artistic achievement: composer and performer. In art photography, an artist is likely to be described as a 'photographer', although further sub-division would be possible in principle.[18] Art photographers are unlikely to embrace novel titles as ugly as 'visualizer and renderer', analogous to composer and performer, but the underlying idea merits reflection.[19]

In classical music, different types of creative contribution and artistic achievement are attributed to the composer and the performer, but classical music is not two entirely separate artistic endeavours, composition plus performance, bolted together. The creativity of the composer and performer are interdependent. The composer creates a composition that has its first manifestation in a written score, and the score is

17 Adams (2002, x) remarks that "musicianship is not merely rendering the notes accurately, but performing them with the appropriate sensitivity and imaginative communication".

18 Existing terms within the photography industry include 'printer', 'print maker', 'technician', and 'photo finisher', but with these terms the status of creative contribution is unclear or undervalued. Adams employed printing assistants and spotters, even when producing his fine prints, but he would not have considered them creative contributors. They were implementing instructions, not producing new interpretations. By comparison, Adams sometimes created exhibition fine prints using negatives from other photographers. On these occasions, he viewed his own contribution as a creative interpretation and was explicit that his aim was to create superior quality prints.

19 Adams uses the phrase 'photographic interpretation' to describe the production of a print from a negative. 'Visualizer and Interpreter' might be one way to describe the different roles.

not its last manifestation. The work of creating a composition does not entirely come to an end when the written score has been produced. Rather, the performer who interprets the score in performing the music gives expression to the composition. Some features of the composition will only be determined in the performance and do not appear in the written score.

> Just as different photographers can interpret one subject in numerous ways, depending on personal vision, so might they each make varying prints from identical negatives. (Adams 2003b, 1)

Classical composition is a creative exercise of musical intelligence.[20] One who exercises musical intelligence creatively must understand how the work will sound when it is performed. While the composer may subsequently direct a performance of that work according to a particular interpretation, the same score can be performed with many interpretations.

Musical intelligence is not musical precognition or predetermination. The composer envisages performances while understanding how a range of interpretations are possible. We need not credit the composer with preconceiving every future interpretation to appreciate composition as an achievement that encompasses those interpretations. Performances routinely take place on orchestral instruments that did not exist when the composer was alive. Where Adams explicitly embraced this aspect of his analogy, Brett Weston apparently did not.

The analogy with music helps with understanding creative attribution. It is the proper acknowledgement of different kinds of artistic achievement and creative contribution, particularly when multiple artists have contributed. In music it is possible, but not necessary, for the composer

20 I owe this formulation to conversations with Aaron Ridley.

and performer to be one and the same artist.[21] Market pressure forced early art photography to conform to an expectation that the fine print should come from the hand of the photographer. In functional photography, by contrast, photojournalists could delegate print-making.[22] The music-photography analogy offers a way of understanding photography that liberates it from distorting influences of this kind.

4.2 Critical Appreciation

The music-photography analogy is also useful for considering appraisal, or critical appreciation. Someone listening to classical music can critically appreciate both the performance of the music and the composition. It is coherent to love a particular composition, but hate a particular performance of it, or simply to enjoy one performance more than another. It might be possible to love a composition so much, that you believe no performance has yet done it justice. In art photography, it is already common for critics, including artists, to prefer one fine art print over another version. The music-photography analogy invites us to take a step further—to make space for the idea that someone appreciating fine art photography can critically appraise not just the print, but also the 'visualization' expressively realized in the print.

In Adams's analogy, the photographer's visualization is first set down in a negative, just as a composer sets down a composition in a written score.[23] It is possible to appreciate a visualization without examining the negative, just as a composition can be appreciated without examining

21 I refer to a singular 'composer' and 'performer' for simplicity. In practice, a single composer or single photographer is common but, like any art form, multiple artists may be involved in any stage of the creative process.

22 In practice, Adams himself retained this view and believed that he alone could produce definitive prints of his work. But, in theory at least, he recognized that a more liberal stance befits photography as a medium.

23 The word 'score' is sometimes treated as synonymous with 'composition', and sometimes construed as an abstract object. I have used the term 'written score' to indicate that I am talking about a concrete object.

the written score. The relevant objects of appreciation are not the print and the negative.[24] That would be analogous to appreciating a performance and a written score, which is not how musical appreciation works. A musician or musicologist will take direct interest in a written score, but someone listening to the music is appreciating a performance from the written score, rather than a performance and a written score. Similarly, someone viewing a photograph can appreciate a print from a negative, without needing to examine both the print and the negative. It is possible to listen to many performances without ever reading the written score and view many print versions without ever seeing the negative.

The music-photography analogy carries another interesting implication: no single print counts as the final expression of the photographer's visualization, and no collection of prints can exhaust the potential for critically appreciating the visualization.[25] When fine art photography is analogous with music, it has no terminus. It is always possible for further prints to be produced, like further musical performances. Critical appreciation of a visualization is not exhausted by viewing all the existing print versions—more interpretations can be produced, using new techniques and technology. Seen this way, fine art photography is inherently open to the future.

5 Critical Comparison of Adams and Weston

Adams and Weston both considered visualization the essence of their art practice, but Weston did not subscribe to the music-photography analogy. It is helpful to contrast their views to acknowledge that different conceptions of visualization exist, and that visualization is compatible with different kinds of art practice. I suggest that the music-pho-

24 In the next section I will note that there is a problem with equivocation in Adam's view. He wants to treat negatives as written scores, but negatives are also performances.

25 Brett Weston disagreed. He believed that the photographer's own version was definitive and final.

tography analogy offers a more fruitful understanding of visualization than Weston's approach.

Weston believed that the photographic image was, in its essence, finalized at the moment of exposure and chose a printing method that deviated as little as possible from this ideal. He placed the developed negatives directly onto photosensitive paper and 'contact printed', without enlargement or cropping, using a single source of light.[26] The result was designed to be as close as possible to the 'image' that he had pre-visualized while focussing an optical image on the ground glass of his reflective camera.

> My way of working — I start with no preconceived idea—discovery excites me to focus—then rediscovery through the lens—final form of presentation seen on ground glass, the finished print previsioned complete in every detail of texture, movement, proportion, *before exposure* — the shutter's release automatically and finally fixes my conception, allowing no after manipulation —the ultimate end, the print, is but a duplication of all that I saw and felt through my camera. (Weston 1981, 311-312)

Weston's print-making practice contrasts with the methods employed by Adams, who used sophisticated darkroom equipment, including enlargers and multiple light sources, to reinterpret different prints from each negative. Although Weston and Adams both espoused visualization, Weston's method does not fit the music-photography analogy. Weston did not conceive of his negative as a score, but perhaps, rather, a printing-plate. His printing process was not conceived of as an interpretative performance, but a faithful duplication of the image through negative-positive reversal.

26 "Edward Weston produced his extraordinary photographic prints in a spartan darkroom where the most elaborate device was an old dry mounting-press; his prints were made without enlarger, using only a contact printing frame beneath a bare light bulb suspended from the ceiling." (Adams 2002, 195)

When illness prevented Weston from printing his own negatives, his sons Brett and Cole took over. Although Weston did not personally endorse the music-photography analogy, the prints produced by his sons have different aesthetic qualities. Art critics have judged Brett's prints to be superior, perhaps because he was also a fine art photographer in his own right. When printing his father's negatives, Brett creatively re-interpreted the work. So, if the music-photography analogy is applied, critical appreciation of these prints can acknowledge a dual contribution: Weston's original compositions can be appreciated in Brett's expressive 'performances'. We could suppose that Brett and Cole produced different interpretive performances and the former have been judged superior. However, the music-photography analogy also allows for a different comparative evaluation. Consider two cases: a print made by someone who attempts to 're-create' Weston's own interpretation and a print made by someone who attempts to express Weston's pre-visualization while producing a new interpretation.[27] The former might be appreciated for its technical craft; the latter would be appreciated not just as technical craft, but also as a creative achievement.

Of course, this application of the music-photography analogy runs contrary to how these artists and their curators at the time regarded their work. In his autobiography, Adams critically evaluated a Weston retrospective. He objected that significant implications of the music-photography analogy had not guided curatorial decisions, nor were they made evident to viewers of the exhibition.

> In 1983 I saw an exhibit of Edward [Weston]'s work in San Francisco. Old and new prints from the same negative, silver prints in contrast to early platinums, some prints made by Brett and some by Cole, all set on the walls along with prints made by Edward himself. There were 'project prints', proof prints, reproduction

27 I have suggested this contrast just to make a theoretical point. I do not intend to imply that it accurately illustrates the difference between Cole and Brett's work.

> prints, original fine prints and modern interpretations. There was no respect for the importance of printmaking by the artist, thus no decisive message, 'This is Edward Weston's creative intention.' I was dismayed and bewildered. Prints from Edward's negatives made by Brett or by Cole are very fine and I enjoy them too. Yet Edward's prints proclaim the artist in their own inimitable way. It is the comparative display, without even informing the audience that the negatives were performed by several individuals, that disturbed me. Hearing Bach played on the instruments of his time has a certain magic; hearing him played on the noble grand pianos of our time is an altogether different experience. I prefer the latter, but I must respect the former. I would not want to hear them both at the same concert. (Adams 1985, 214)

An early observation by Alfred Stieglitz can be turned into a tool for comparing Weston and Adams. In 1899 Stieglitz wrote,

> In engraving, art stops when the engraver finishes his work, and from that time on the process becomes a mechanical one; and to change the results the plate must be altered. With the skilled photographer, on the contrary, a variety of interpretations may be given of a plate or negative without any alterations whatsoever in the negative, which may at any time be used for striking off a quantity of mechanical prints. (1899, 120)[28]

Weston can be compared to the engraver—he believed that the photographic image is completed during the exposure period, and after that point no alterations are possible, or, at least, not permitted. Devel-

28 In 1897, he favoured methods of enlargement and cropping, claiming that "the prints from the direct negatives have little value as such", and the "the making of the negative alone is not the making of the picture" (Stieglitz 1987, 217). At that time Stieglitz championed Pictorial photography, but even when he cast aside Pictorialism, he still maintained that interpretations of negatives are superior to contact printing. Weston's method is, of course, a reaction against the Pictorial tradition, but arguably he threw the baby out with the bath water. Adams also rejected Pictorialism but retained the baby. Stieglitz considered Adams's work superior to Weston's.

oping the negative and making a contact print were supposed to produce faithful copies of the visualized image, without introducing any changes. By comparison, Adams fits the description of the 'skilled photographer', who believes that a variety of interpretations can be created without any alterations to the negative.

Weston's art practice is built upon pre-visualization, but it has a narrow conception of how pre-visualization leads to a fine art photograph. The endeavour only succeeds insofar as the print is exactly as pre-visualized, or as close as possible. This is an extremely demanding and restrictive requirement. Adams builds his art practice upon visualization, but the music-photography analogy provides an expansive conception of how visualization leads to fine art photographs. The endeavour succeeds when the artist creates an expressive print in which an interpretation of the visualization can be appreciated, but the possibility of further interpretations is unlimited. This offers creative and critical benefits that are not available to Weston.

6 Revising the Analogy

To obtain all the potential benefits of the music-photography analogy, the version proposed by Adams needs modification. I will retain the idea that visualization is like composition, and the idea that prints are like performances, but I will revise the idea that a negative is like a written score.

In music, a written score has no sonic properties, but, in photography, a negative is an image with visible properties—it is in fact a photograph, albeit one with negative tonal values. If print photographs are analogous to performances, it is also reasonable to say that a negative is a kind of performance. This does not imply that the negative cannot be used as a score, but it does imply that the relationship between a negative and a print is not straightforwardly analogous to the relationship between a written score and a musical performance. Raising this point as an objection to Adams complicates and jeopardizes an otherwise

elegant analogy. If developing the film to produce a negative counts as creating a first performance, rather than writing a score, what does this imply for darkroom printing? Should we now have to say that darkroom printing does not use a written score to create a performance, but uses one performance to create another performance? I will return to this difficulty later and argue that such complications can be absorbed into the analogy.

Even if this complication can be smoothed over, the objection might seem unnecessarily pedantic. Evidently in his art practice, Adams himself used the negative as a 'score' for rehearsing work prints and producing fine prints, and he viewed print-making as the activity of creating a performance. He did not conceive of the negative as a photograph; only the print was construed as a photograph. However, his collection of negatives was as important to him as his final prints.[29] This view of the negative would fit his analogy of a composer who has produced a collection of scores. As he explicitly treated the negative simply as a score, we should not expect him to count the development of a negative from an exposed plate or film sheet as creating a performance from a score.[30] Nevertheless, his own writing betrays an important ambivalence. Despite his explicit claims, there is evidence that he would be amenable to the idea that the negative counts as an expressive rendering of the pre-visualized image. In 1927, he created *The Face of Half Dome, Yosemite National Park* and later described the experience of developing the plate and seeing his visualization realized in the negative image:

29 Brett Weston explicitly disagreed. For him, the finished print was the artwork. This is consistent with his decision to destroy all but twelve of his negatives.

30 That said, in *The Negative*, he extensively details complex factors in the development process that deliver superior or inferior qualities in a negative. He states that the process is fundamentally the same as developing a print. (Adams 2002, 181-192).

> This photograph represents my first conscious visualization; in my mind's eye I saw (with reasonable completeness) the final image as made with the red filter. [...] I can still recall the excitement of seeing the visualization 'come true' when I removed the plate from the fixing bath for examination. The desired values were all there in their beautiful negative interpretation. (Adams quoted in Schaefer 1999, 152)

Adams described meeting Paul Strand, around 1930, when Strand had with him a collection of negatives but no prints. Adams viewed this collection with pleasure and appraised the aesthetic qualities of the negatives, such as the tones and clarity of expression. This can be seen as the expert appreciation of one composer admiring another musician's written score, but it is also undeniably the appreciation of a visual image, analogous to a performance.

> They were glorious negatives: full, luminous shadows and strong high values in which subtle passages of tone were preserved. The compositions were extraordinary: perfect, uncluttered edges and beautifully distributed shapes that he had carefully selected and interpreted as forms – simple, yet of great power. I would have preferred to see prints, but the negatives clearly communicated Strand's vision. (Adams 1985, 88)

In Adams's theorising, he conceives of the negative as a written score, and there is evidence that this is how he worked from his negatives in practice. But throughout his reflections and critical comments, it is apparent that he also recognizes that the negative is a photographic image and can creatively express a visualization.

Even if I am correct that a negative is not simply equivalent to a written score, it would be too strong to claim that a negative has equivalent status to a fine art print. So, it cannot be considered a performance in the full sense that Adams has in mind. The same is true of proof prints,

work prints, and other items that are merely part of the workflow, and so fall short of a fine art performance.

I am persuaded that a print is analogous to a performance, but not persuaded that the correct analogy for a written score is a negative. While I have found some support for an objection by pointing to ambivalence in his critical practice, this is not decisive. I have conceded that a negative image would not count as an expressive performance and that in art practice, a negative can function as a written score. However, this is not the end of the matter. My remaining objection is based on a deeper disagreement: Adams is committed to a single-stage conception of photography. In the next section, I will argue that the multi-stage account offers a more coherent version of the analogy, where the written score is analogous to a photographic register, not a photographic image.

7 Inheriting and Rejecting the Single-Stage Account

I noted that taking the perspective of photographers seriously does not mean that claims should be uncritically accepted. This is not only because photographers sometimes hold contrary views. More importantly, Adams, Strand, Stieglitz, Weston, and many others inherited and maintained a traditional 'single-stage' conception of photography that is not just a preconception, but also a misconception.

The single-stage view of photography is the notion that a photographic image is produced and secured during the exposure period. When Weston states that "the recording process is instantaneous, and the nature of the image such that it cannot survive corrective handiwork", he means that by the end of the exposure period, an image has been created. As he puts it, "with the shutter's release the isolated image becomes unalterably fixed." (Weston 1934, 316).

In their technical craft, Adams and Weston were acutely aware of the material difference between undeveloped film and a developed negative. However, when theorising about their art practice, they looked

past these differences and proceeded conceptually as if an exposed but undeveloped film were already, in a sense, a negative image. This is because they were influenced by single-stage orthodoxy. The single-stage account supposes that a photographic image is created during exposure and initially exists as an invisible latent image on undeveloped film.[31] The latent image is made visible during the development process, so the developed negative supposedly displays the very image that was initially created during exposure.[32] This is a misconception. Developing a negative is not a process of revealing a concealed image. Rather, chemical deposits that do not yet form an image are materially converted into an image. The negative image is a photographic image that exists for the first time only when developing and fixing is complete.[33]

Making an exposure—allowing light to interact with a photosensitive surface—is not equivalent to making a negative, but Weston and Adams treated it as such. For Adams, exposure is the exposure of the negative, or 'negative exposure' (Adams 2002, 219). He also commonly refers to his exposed but undeveloped plates or sheets as 'negatives'. However, this terminology harbours a conceptual confusion because 'negative' is short for negative image. A plate that has been exposed but not yet developed is not truly a negative because it is not an image. It only becomes an image after a rendering process.

31 Adams writes: "On exposure, the light produces an invisible *latent image* composed of crystals that will form image silver when developed, but have not yet undergone any detectable change." (2002, 17 – emphasis in the original). His technical description is accurate—undetectable crystals have been produced by the action of light—but his ideological claim is wrong—the crystals do not constitute an invisible image.

32 Weston writes: "What is known as my "fine technique" is simply an intelligent awareness of values and textures, and the power of translating the image on my ground glass through comprehensive focusing and instinctive exposure – into my silver emulsion – thence on into the development of the latent image and the final printing in platinum." (1922, 227)

33 See Wilson (2021) for a historical discussion and critique of the notion of the 'invisible latent image'.

The dominance of the single-stage view reflects the curious fact that photography has not established a distinct noun in English to refer precisely to a plate or film sheet that has been exposed but not yet developed.[34] The term 'exposures' is occasionally used, but these items are customarily referred to as 'undeveloped negatives' (or 'undeveloped prints' if talking about a later stage of the process). The prefix 'undeveloped' is often dropped, and they casually become 'negatives', which generates ambiguity. For example, after a trip to the mountains, Adams writes that he has in his bag a dozen good negatives—when, in fact, he is carrying exposed but undeveloped film sheets.

Adams, Weston, and others proceeded on the assumption that when they had completed an exposure, they had, in all relevant respects, already secured the negative image. The exposed but undeveloped plate held the same status as a negative. Adams and Weston had such mastery of development technique that they were entitled to anticipate results with reasonable certainty, so they could afford to treat securing correctly exposed film as sufficient for securing their desired negative. But the notion of an invisible latent image is a myth and, contrary to their own art theorising, when Adams or Weston developed a negative, they were not making visible an image that already existed.

I can agree with Adams that the exposure of a plate or film sheet produces a kind of score. But, prior to development, I do not agree that the item in question is a negative. Recall that in Adams's view,

> The key to the satisfactory application of visualization lies in getting the appropriate information on the negative. This can be compared to the writing of a musical score. (Adams 2002, x)

But notice that Adams does not observe that making an exposure and making a negative are two different stages. For him, the information

34 I would be interested to know if there are languages which do recognize a distinct term.

that can be retrieved from the negative is simply the information that was put there during the exposure. I suggest that writing a score is like making an exposure—it is not like developing a negative. Therefore, the written score finds its proper analogy in the exposed but undeveloped plate or film. This does not mean that the written score is analogous to a latent image. Instead, it is analogous to what I call the photographic 'register' in my multi-stage account of photography.[35]

Visualization informs the creation of the photographic register. The photographic register is not an image, but it is analogous to a written score. Image-rendering using information from the register is like a performance from a score. Hence, a photo-chemical negative image is a one-time performance. While the idea that the development of a negative is a one-time-only performance seems like a problem, the analogy can absorb this difficulty.

In negative-positive photography, two photographic events must occur. The first photographic event produces a register that is rendered into a negative image. The second photographic event occurs in the darkroom, passing light through the negative to create a new register that is rendered into a positive image. Every time a negative is used to produce a print, there is scope for 'creative-intuitive' composition during the darkroom photographic event.

8 Implications of the Revised Analogy

I owe it to Adams to consider a generous reconstruction of his position that removes the conflation mistake but still fits his original analogy. Adams could accept that, for photography, a conjoined process of, first, creating a photographic register and, second, developing a negative image is analogous to a musician writing a score. However, he might insist that the developed negative remains the item analogous to the written score.

35 See Wilson (2021).

Charitably, this would allow Adams to avoid my conflation objection. But it is not a good reason to accept his view as his position is contingent on, and limited to, the negative-positive process that he worked with. It would restrict the application of his analogy to one kind of photographic technology and fail to apply it to any process that lacks a negative. Fortunately, an alternative is available that better fits the spirit of his analogy.

If we look to technologies that are photo-electrical rather than photo-chemical, the true spirt of the analogy emerges. Digital photography does not involve a negative-positive process. Although a RAW camera file is sometimes called a 'digital negative', this is a misleading homage to the chemical past. It stores unprocessed data direct from the camera sensor and the data must be selectively processed to produce a visible image. A RAW file is therefore equivalent to exposed but undeveloped film rather than a developed negative.

In chemical photography, each individual register can only be developed once.[36] It is not possible to return a negative, or print, to its undeveloped state. A digital RAW file is a score that can be performed unlimited times and has the potential for expressive re-interpretations while still retaining all the original unprocessed data. Photo-electrical photography fulfils Adams's analogy far better than photo-chemical photography.

Adams's analogy is specific in two respects: he is thinking about classical music within a composer-performer paradigm and fine art photography within a negative-positive paradigm. Music and photography are each vastly broader than these specific paradigms, so there is scope to expand the music-photography analogy in several directions.

36 In practice, a previously developed image might sometimes be put through secondary 'development' processes, such as selenium toning, which can sometimes amplify information in the register. This does not undermine the main philosophical point, which is that a photographic register is not yet an image, and any photographic image must have gone through a rendering process.

One critical response to the multi-stage account of photography has been: consider examples x, y, z—Do they count as photographs or not? Setting aside the separate question—Is this art or not?—the music-photography analogy may help here. Not all music has the classical composer-performer paradigm. Not all music is tonal. Not all music is performed live. Synthesized instruments create 'performances' that human performers would not be able to achieve. Improvisation is possible. Sampling is commonplace. Rather than looking for an answer to the narrow question 'Is x a photograph?', perhaps we need an answer to a different kind of question: Is this a rendering from a photographic register? The result would produce two very broad categories: items with and without a photographic event in their causal history. Even when a photographic event has occurred, evidence of that aetiology would only be salient in the final product to a greater or lesser degree, so there would be enormous diversity across the full range of cases. In comparison, the question 'Is this a photograph?' permits a simple answer in a much narrower range of cases.

9 Conclusion

In opposition to prevailing scepticism, Adams sought to convince the world that photographers could create fine art. It was widely believed that the medium of photography is inherently unfit for expressive art because photographs were the mind-independent products of a largely mechanical process. The f64 Straight Photography group were among the first to argue that photographers could create fine art in virtue of the medium, rather than in spite of the medium. But, ultimately, they shared the same single-stage preconception as their sceptical opponents. I have suggested that claims about visualization in art practice become more plausible and powerful if the single-stage preconception is replaced with a multi-stage account of photography.

Single-stage accounts attempt to make room for artistic creativity by looking at decisions and interventions on either side of the interval

during which the image is supposed to come into existence. This is unsatisfactory. If it were true that an image is autonomously produced at the moment of exposure, photographic creativity would be limited to preparations before the image is created and modifications of the image after it has been created. With these limitations, the single-stage view cannot meet the challenge of aesthetic scepticism. The multi-stage view can meet the challenge because it denies that an image comes into existence during exposure. The production of the image is a multi-stage process that necessarily includes the registration of light during a photographic event, while extending, concertina-fashion, to activities before and after that event.

I have rejected the idea that exposed but undeveloped film holds an invisible, latent image. But this is compatible with acknowledging, figuratively at least, that a different kind of latent image is important in photography. This is the 'image' visualized by the artist before the photographic event occurs. As Geoffrey Batchen puts it, "the image comes before the photograph (which is merely its reproduction), and the film is already inscribed with a picture before it is ever exposed to light." (2001, 52). This is what Weston meant when he said that "the *finished print must be created in full before the film is exposed."* (1943, 172) and why Adams wrote "Visualization is a conscious process of projecting the final photographic image in the mind before taking the first steps in actually photographing the subject." (2002, 1).

Taking seriously the testimony of photographers cannot carry any expectation that photographers will express a consensus view of photography or art practice.[37] Instead, the expectation must be for philosophers to recognize a plurality of art practices, precisely because the agency and intentionality of photographers is internal rather than

37 Garry Winogrand produced thousands of photographic 'registers' but did not develop them as negatives. Adams created thousands of negatives that he did not have time to print. Brett Weston destroyed all but twelve of his negatives after he had created prints.

external to the photographic process. Yet, photographers hold different views. Philosophers taking seriously the testimony of photographers may be a step towards photographers engaging in dialogue with philosophy—hopefully concluding that philosophical investigation can have significant implications for creative and critical practice.

In Edward and Brett Weston's view of fine art photography, the print is the only thing that really matters, and the photographic image visible in the print came into existence at the moment of exposure. Subsequent process stages merely reveal and present that image to best effect. This conception of the creation of a photograph fully embraces the fantasy of the single-stage account of photography. Pre-visualization in combination with an engraver-print-maker model of art practice simply reinforces that fantasy.

Like Weston, Adams presupposes a single-stage view of photography, but the composer-performer model of art practice puts him in a better position. The music-photography analogy obliges him to recognize the importance of negatives as well as prints, unlike Weston who considers the negatives redundant once a definitive print is accomplished. Adams does not consider a negative to be a performance; in his eyes, it is a written score. I have argued that negatives and prints are both photographic images, so the negative is not properly analogous to the written score. The proper analogy lies with the register. Adams fails to distinguish between the register and the negative because the single-stage view promotes the conflation of these distinct process stages. The multi-stage account of photography pulls apart these process stages but creates a new problem for the analogy: in chemical photography, the development of a negative would be equivalent to a score that permits a one-time-only performance. It is possible to accommodate this difficulty while maintaining the music-photography analogy, but a different application of the analogy is also available. When the photographic register is a digital RAW file, it serves as a written score that can

be reperformed without limit—just as Adams envisaged. Adams offered a visualization-based art practice in combination with a music-photography analogy. When revised in light of the multi-stage account of photography, this opens new ways of understanding creative and critical practice in both chemical and digital photography.

Critics, theorists, and practitioners have expressed concern that the medium of photography may degenerate or disintegrate as chemical technology increasingly gives way to digital technology. Combining the multi-stage account of photography with the music-photography analogy produces a far more optimistic perspective. For creative artists and art appreciators, digital technology makes it possible to realize the full potential of the music-photography analogy, which opens exciting new ways to create and appreciate art photography in the future. At the same time, applying the music-photography analogy to the history of chemical art photography makes it possible to retrospectively survey art history to find unrecognized or underappreciated examples of the composer-performer paradigm.[38]

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38 This article has been on my mind for years and I have presented variations on many occasions so I am indebted to more people than I can mention. However, I must sincerely thank the editors and reviewers of *Debates in Aesthetics*: Claire Anscomb, Eleen Deprez, and Daniel Cavedon-Taylor, for their patience and generosity.

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WILSON'S MULTI-STAGE ACCOUNT AND THE DILEMMA OF VIDEOGAME PHOTOGRAPHY

Ben Campion
University of Warwick

Through her revision of Ansel Adams's analogy between classical music and fine-art photography, Dawn M. Wilson arrives at a compelling idea: we can identify photographs by asking if an image contains a 'photographic event' in its causal history. This test provides a basis to accommodate a broader range of photographic practices than previous philosophical accounts of photography have allowed. In her discussion of Adams's analogy, however, Wilson also makes it clear that accommodating first-order practice does not mean accepting every claim made by photographers as true. In this paper, I will argue that these competing tendencies are indicative of a tension in the 'multi-stage' account of photography that informs much of Wilson's work, including the test she derives from her revision of Adams's analogy. This tension, I will argue, is foregrounded by 'videogame photography': static images produced using videogames that have recently enjoyed increased popularity among photographers and photography institutions. Despite its increasing presence in the photographic art world, it is unclear whether videogame photography can be viewed as photography proper using Wilson's test, without substantially diluting the theoretical commitments of the multi-stage account. I will conclude, therefore, that videogame photography presents a dilemma for the account: it either compromises its theoretical rigour to accommodate videogame photography, or it rejects this artform, thereby compromising its ability to accommodate first-order practice.

1 Introduction

In her paper for this issue of *Debates in Aesthetics*, Dawn M. Wilson (2024) analyses and revises an analogy between photography and classical music proposed by photographer Ansel Adams. Perhaps the most compelling feature of Adams's analogy, strengthened and foregrounded by Wilson's revisions, is its open conception of the photographic medium. This is embodied by a claim Wilson makes towards the end of her paper: that we should move towards using the presence of a 'photographic event' in an image's causal history as the defining trait of photography. This claim potentially provides a basis for accommodating a broader range of photographic practices than previous philosophical accounts of photography have allowed. Simultaneously, however, Wilson makes clear that accommodating first-order practice does not mean that we should accept every claim made by photographers as true.

There is, therefore, potential for a tension to arise between two elements of Wilson's work: the desire to provide a philosophical account of photography that accommodates the varying practices of photographers themselves, and the need to maintain the philosophical rigour of that account by rejecting at least some claims made by photographers. I will argue that this tension is highlighted by 'videogame photography' which, for now, I will think of as static images created using videogame characters and environments that have recently enjoyed an increased presence in photographic exhibitions and art theory surrounding photography.[1] Despite videogame photography's rise in the photographic art world, I will argue that it is unclear whether Wilson's account can accommodate it without a substantial dilution of the account's theoretical commitments. Videogame photography, therefore, poses a dilemma for Wilson's account: it compromises either its theoretical rigour to

1 There is debate around what terms such as 'videogame photography' describe. The definition offered here should therefore be taken as a working one until I discuss these debates in section 3, at which point the exact definition of what I take videogame photography to describe will be clarified.

accept videogame photography or its ability to accommodate first-order practice by rejecting videogame photography. I conclude by suggesting that accepting either horn of this dilemma is unsatisfactory, and that future work inspired by the new theory needs to seek a more satisfactory way out of the dilemma.

I will begin by outlining Wilson's take on Adams's analogy, aiming to demonstrate how the tension outlined above arises in her work. Next, I will discuss some of the existing literature on videogame photography in order to situate the practices surrounding this artform and to highlight that no existing account provides a firm basis on which videogame imagery should be considered a form of photography. Finally, I will argue that, although it might seem that Wilson's account *could* provide a basis for viewing videogame photography as photography proper, it can only do so by compromising its theoretical commitments. However, rejecting videogame photography on this basis puts the account at odds with first-order practice, leading to the dilemma outlined above.

2 Adams's Analogy and the Multi-stage Account of Photography

Like many modernist photographers, Adams was a proponent of 'visualization'. According to his contemporary, Edward Weston, visualization is the idea that in the mind's eye "*the finished print must be created in full before the film is exposed*" (Weston 1980, 172, original emphasis) so that procedures can be implemented to ensure the printed image reflects the visualized image.

Wilson argues that visualization manifests itself in Adams's photographic theory through an analogy with classical music, wherein "the negative is the score, and prints are performances" (Wilson 2024, 20). Here, the photographer is akin to a composer crafting a negative reflecting their visualized image, which is then interpreted in prints, which constitute performances of the negative 'score'. On Adams's analogy, therefore, the materialisation of a visualized image within a negative and making prints from that negative are distinct creative achieve-

ments.

Wilson argues that Adams's analogy, by viewing the creation of a print as a separate task from the creation of a negative, "leads to the idea that, like performances, different prints can vary in their appreciable qualities" (2024, 21), meaning different prints can reinterpret the original visualization. Furthermore, Wilson argues that reinterpretation is not limited to the original photographer as "performances of the photographer's 'score' may include reinterpretations created by different artists" (2024, 22). As each print uniquely interprets the negative, there is nothing to stop different photographers from reinterpreting each other's negatives in their own prints, much as different musicians can reinterpret each other's scores.

Adams's view is, therefore, capable of accommodating multiple reinterpretations of photographic negatives by different artists. To gain full benefit from the open nature of Adams's analogy, however, Wilson argues that it requires revision. She contends that Adams holds what she calls a 'single-stage' view of photography, detracting from the accuracy of his analogy. The single-stage account of photography is opposed to what Wilson calls the 'multi-stage' account.[2]

The difference between these accounts concerns at which point an image comes into existence in the process of creating a photograph. As Wilson states in her paper 'Invisible Images and Indeterminacy':

> A single-stage account supposes that during exposure a photograph comes into existence. A multi-stage account supposes that, subsequent to the exposure stage, a further processing stage is necessary before a photograph exists. (Wilson 2021, 162)

2 In the literature influenced by single and multi-stage accounts, including the book-length studies by Diarmuid Costello (2018) and Dominic Lopes (2016), these accounts are sometimes referred to as the 'orthodox' and 'new' theories of photography. To maintain consistency with Wilson's article, here I will use her original terminology.

Stressing the necessity of further processes, such as chemical or digital processing, is central to the multi-stage account. The single-stage account does not reject these processes, but posits that they only reveal an invisible or 'latent' image that is created during the exposure—sometimes called the photographic event in Wilson's work (Phillips 2009, 337-338; Wilson 2021, 163). The multi-stage account, by contrast, argues that no image, latent or otherwise, exists after the photographic event. What is created at this point is what Wilson calls a 'register', chemically or digitally recorded information about the photographed scene (Wilson 2021, 163). The register has no visual qualities itself but can be used to create an image via subsequent processing.

In Adams's analogy, he posits that the negative takes the role of a score and prints made from that negative take the role of performances. This, for Wilson, betrays his belief in a single-stage view of photography. The idea of the negative as a score which is interpreted in the 'performances' of prints implies that no interpretative work is done to bring about the negative itself. This makes the undeveloped negative, at least conceptually, equivalent to a latent image recorded during the photographic event, which is merely revealed by subsequent development (Wilson 2024, 35-36).

However, as the multi-stage account argues, there is no image created at this point, only a register. As further processing is necessary to create an image from this register, even a negative one, Wilson argues that it is more accurate to view the register as analogous to a score:

> Therefore, the written score finds its proper analogy in the exposed but undeveloped plate or film. This does not mean that the written score is analogous to a latent image. Instead it is analogous to what I call the photographic 'register' in my multi-stage account of photography. (2024, 38)

One of the benefits of seeing the register, rather than the negative, as

equivalent to the score is that it allows Adams's analogy—which in its original version is only applicable to the negative-positive process—to be applied to photography which does not utilize negatives, including digital photography. In general, digital photography involves the creation of a RAW file—essentially a digital photographic register—which can then be processed into one or multiple images. Wilson argues that, on her revised analogy:

> A digital RAW file is a score that can be performed unlimited times and has the potential for expressive re-interpretations while still retaining all the original unprocessed data. Photo-electrical photography [therefore] fulfils Adams's analogy far better than photo-chemical photography. (2024, 39)

Adams's analogy, then, despite the alleged inaccuracies of its original formulation, is at its core well suited to account for new and emerging forms of photography. This openness regarding the photographic medium is expressed in a statement Wilson makes towards the end of her paper with regard to what images count as photographs:

> Rather than looking for an answer to the narrow question 'Is x a photograph?', perhaps we need an answer to a different kind of question: Is this a rendering from a photographic register? The result would produce two very broad categories: items with and without a photographic event in their causal history. (2024, 40)

I find this idea compelling, as it takes the expansive spirit of Adams's analogy and utilizes the multi-stage account to apply it broadly, creating a more accepting conception of what counts as photographic than that which has been held by philosophers employing the single-stage view. For example, Roger Scruton, a prominent advocate of the single-stage view, argues that:

> In characterizing the relation between the ideal photograph and its subject, one is characterizing not an intention but a causal process. (Scruton 1981, 579)

As the relationship between an ideal photograph and its subject are purely causal for Scruton, any kind of intentional handiwork performed after the registration of light during the photographic event cannot be seen as truly photographic. Clearly, this view excludes a vast body of photography where such practices are regularly employed. Wilson's view, by contrast, has no problem accommodating this kind of photography, as her view only requires that an image has a photographic event in its causal history to be considered photographic.

An advantage of Wilson's view over single-stage views like Scruton's, therefore, is that it provides a basis for accommodating a variety of photographic practices. However, Wilson also emphasizes that her position does not accept every claim made by photographers as true, a point she makes explicitly in her paper (Wilson 2024, 19) and is demonstrated by the fact that she views it as necessary to revise Adams's analogy because of his views on photographic aetiology. There is potential, then, for a tension to arise in Wilson's account when a claim is made by photographic practice that does not fit the account's conception of photography. This tension is between the desire to accommodate a range of photographic practices, and the desire to maintain the theoretical principles of the multi-stage account. This is foregrounded, I would argue, by an increasingly popular emerging artform: videogame photography.

3 Situating Videogame Photography

Static images of videogame characters and environments have long been shared among online communities. Recently, however, such images have found a place in the traditional art world, with prominent photography galleries featuring these images in exhibitions. For example, the exhibition *How to Win at Photography*, displayed at both

Fotomuseum Winterthur in 2021 and *The Photographer's Gallery* in 2022, prominently featured videogame images. Furthermore, several artists who produce such images refer to them explicitly as photography. For example, Justin Berry refers to his videogame images as "photographs taken from within video games" (Berry 2018) and Leo Sang describes his practice as using "video games as platforms for everyday photography" (Sang, n.d.). This introduction of videogame imagery into the established art world, specifically the *photographic* art world, has coincided with theoretical discussion of videogame imagery as a form of photography.

Videogame photography is a difficult concept to define due to the varying practices the term could describe, some of which do not involve image-making at all. For example, Cindy Poremba identifies two ways in which videogames and photography combine. The first of these is as a documentary practice in which players create images of videogame worlds "to commemorate their travels, obtain a visual record of enjoyable experiences, and show evidence of their experiences to friends and family" (Poremba 2007, 50). The second of these is as a ludic tool within some games, wherein photography, being for her "an inherently game-like practice" (Ibid., 53), is simulated at varying levels of complexity as a gameplay mechanic, but not necessarily as a means of producing images accessible outside the videogame.

Since Wilson's multi-stage account is concerned with photography as a process of image-making, I wish to focus on this form of videogame photography rather than games that simulate photography. However, this in itself is a broad category that requires further investigation.

One way to think of videogame photography as a process of image-making is simply as a subtype of what Winfried Gerling calls 'screen images': images of what is displayed on a screen, such as a TV, computer, or projector screen, produced using a real-world camera (Gerling 2018, 150). Certainly, some artistic videogame images do fit the description

of a screen image. Joan Pamboukes' series *Videogame Color Fields*, for example, is produced using a DSLR to photograph a screen outputting videogame graphics. I do not wish to focus too much on screen images here, however. They are generally conventionally produced photographs and easily accommodated by the multi-stage account.

What is more interesting to consider is videogame photography wherein software on the system running the game is used to create the image, rather than an external camera. As Sebastian Möring and Marco de Mutiis (2019) point out, images of this variety are generally produced using one of three methods, each of which progressively abstracts from restrictions imposed by the rules of the videogame in order to give the artist more creative freedom.[3]

The first of these methods utilizes 'photo modes'. A photo mode is a software tool built-in to certain videogames that allows players to "freeze the flow of the action and to effectively step out of the game in order to focus on the isolated act of photographing landscapes or character portraits" (Ibid., 78). An example of a photo mode comes from the game *Super Mario Odyssey* (2017). In the usual flow of gameplay, the player explores a 3D environment collecting resources in order to progress, a goal which is resisted by enemies that attempt to harm the player character. Using the photo mode, the player can freeze the flow of gameplay and create images of the frozen environment without the risk of losing the game.

Although photo modes afford greater creative freedom for image-making than that which is conventionally found in videogames, Möring and de Mutiis argue that even within these modes the restrictions imposed by the game's mechanics "still influences the scene (and scenery) which the player may photograph" (2019, 82), as the player can only access

3 Like Poremba, Möring and de Mutiis also discuss videogame photography as simulations of photography within videogames. Here, however, I focus exclusively on their discussion of videogame photography as image-making.

areas to use the photo mode if they have the skill to clear and reach the game's challenges. Furthermore, the creative choices the player can make while in the photo mode are largely dictated by the game, as it is the tools within the photo mode that the player uses to create their images. Perhaps because of these limitations, artists producing imagery from videogames often utilize a method even more abstracted from the source game: screenshotting. Within Möring and de Mutiis's work, 'screenshotting' describes the practice of creating a static image of a videogame scene using means external to the videogame itself, such as a camera pointed at the screen as in Gerling's screen-images, or via software on the system which is running the videogame but is not internal to the game itself (Ibid., 83). As I have already argued that images taken using an external camera are uninteresting for my current argument, I will take screenshots to exclusively mean images created using software internal to the system running the videogame, despite Möring and de Mutiis's inclusion of screen-images in this category. Screenshotting, on my account, is therefore a software process which is "(largely) independent from the source game" (Ibid.), as the means by which the image is produced exists independently from the game software, giving the player greater artistic control over the images she produces.

Möring and de Mutiis's final method of videogame photography combines screenshotting with modifying the game software itself by altering "core game parameters, intervening directly at a level of code manipulation" (Ibid., 84). By modifying the code of the game, artists can change the game's core mechanics so that they are more conducive to creative ends. For example, one could modify a game to remove restrictions on accessing certain areas within the game, making it possible for the artist to capture these areas. This practice of modifying games to make them more conducive to screenshotting, therefore, represents a complete subversion of the mechanics of the game to the creative aims of the player. Within this category, the player themselves dictates these mechanics in order to achieve their artistic ends.

4 The Multi-stage Account and Videogame Photography

The typology of methods presented by Möring and de Mutiis helps us identify the variety of image-making practices within videogame photography. However, I would argue that identifying cases of an image-making practice that utilizes videogames is all their approach can do. The key question left open is whether these practices are accurately described by the term *photography.* Following Wilson, one way to answer this question is by asking if the practices described by Möring and de Mutiis have a photographic event in their causal history. To see if this is the case, it is necessary to outline the process that underpins these methods.

All three of the methods described in the previous section involve using software, either internal or external to the source videogame, to create an image. To do so, graphical information stored temporarily in the computer system's video memory (known as VRAM), which is usually output directly to the screen connected to the system, is also recorded on the system's permanent storage. This graphical information is then processed so the system reads it as an image file.

It could be proposed that there are similarities here to Wilson's multi-stage account of the photographic process. Both the scene before a camera and the graphical information generated by a computer system are fleeting. To be preserved, a kind of recording stage is necessary, either in the form of a photographic event or a screenshot command. Neither of these records are appreciable images in and of themselves: extra processing is required for the information to be visually accessible.

On the basis that the screenshot command records information to be processed as a visual image, it could be argued that the issuing of a screenshot command bears a similarity to the photographic event. By extension, following Wilson's claim that categorizations of photographic images should focus on the question of whether X image has a photographic event in its causal history, it could be argued that screen-

shots, including videogame photography, do constitute a category of photography.

The problem with this argument, however, is that it suggests that a photographic event could occur without the action of light. This contradicts Wilson's own formulation of the photographic event, wherein the action of light in producing the register is consistently emphasized (Phillips 2009, 338; Wilson 2021, 163). Light is also emphasized in Paloma Atencia-Linares's account of 'photographic means', wherein the action of light is not only necessary to guarantee the photographic nature of the register, but also any subsequent processes of development in the darkroom (Atencia-Linares 2012, 21-22). Furthermore, image formation through the action of light has generally been seen as fundamental to the medium, and it was central to the thought of the pioneers of photographic technology (Daguerre 1980, 12; Niepce 1980, 5; Talbot 1980, 29).

The fact that removing light as an essential element of the photographic event contradicts preceding accounts is not on its own a convincing argument against doing so. However, I would suggest that a more convincing argument is that rejecting the necessity of the action of light broadens the idea of the photographic event beyond the point of being useful for identifying photographic images. Creating a spectrogram—an image that visually represents the frequencies in a piece of audio—involves a sonic recording followed by visual rendering from that recording. Would spectrograms, therefore, also be photographic? Doing so, I would argue, broadens 'photography' to the point of becoming a meaningless category.

It seems, then, that we need to retain light as an essential part of the photographic event if the term 'photography' is to retain its utility as a category. By extension, videogame photography would be inadmissible as a proper form of photography on Wilson's multi-stage account. However, this conclusion also presents a problem for the multi-stage

account.

As I argued in section 1, one of the benefits of the multi-stage account is that it provides a philosophical basis for accepting works as photographic that philosophers advocating the single-stage approach had rejected as such, even while theorists and practitioners of photography had readily accepted them. The problem that videogame photography presents to the multi-stage account, therefore, is that it seems to challenge the harmony the account has enjoyed with photographic practice. The multi-stage account as it exists cannot comfortably accommodate videogame photography, but in rejecting it, the account also rejects the claim made by a growing number of artists and institutions that videogame photography *just is* photography.

One response to this might be to argue that the institutions and artists who categorize videogame photography as photography proper are simply wrong to do so. Without an argument for what is gained when one categorizes these images as photography, there is not enough force behind the claim that videogame photography just is photography for the new theorist to view it as a serious challenge.

However, reasons *are* often offered for why this categorization is beneficial. Returning to Justin Berry's work, he says this about comparisons between his traditional and videogame photographs:

> Both the virtual photos and the physical one were taken while on a journey, both were captured in stages, combining dozens, or hundreds, of images for each picture. (Berry 2018)

For Berry, what defines his photography in both the real and virtual space is a particular process involving the gathering and combining of several images to create a complete work. For him, whether or not this involves a causal registration of light is irrelevant. Thus, categorizing videogame photography as photography proper is useful for Berry, as it

highlights what he sees as crucial to photographic practice outside of a causal registration of light.

Another suggestive aspect of Berry's work is that he often displays his videogame images alongside his traditional photographs, with no clear indication of which images are real and which are virtual. Displaying his work this way, with no evident dividing line between the real and the virtual, is a clear challenge to the audience to consider all the images on an equal footing, regardless of whether they are created by real or simulated light. The suggestion here is akin to a microcosm of a claim philosopher David Chalmers has put forward in a recent book: as simulations of real-world phenomena become increasingly sophisticated, the case for seeing the virtual as different in kind from the real becomes increasingly weak (Chalmers 2022). Berry's method of displaying his work takes this claim and applies it specifically to the distinction between the real and the virtual in photography. This, then, is a further way in which the categorization of videogame photography as photography proper is meant to be useful: as a theoretical challenge to a sharp distinction between the real and the virtual within photography.

One could disagree with any of these claims, and my aim is not to endorse them here. My purpose instead has been to demonstrate that, since proponents of videogame photography can provide reasons for the usefulness of its categorization as photography proper, the challenge remains for the multi-stage account to take seriously the idea that this new medium may be truly photographic.

Therefore, the dilemma videogame photography presents for the multi-stage account still stands. On the one hand, the account can maintain its theoretical rigor by rejecting videogame photography as true photography, on the basis that it does not involve recording via the action of light. However, this puts the multi-stage account at odds with first-order practice, a position the account had previously been able to avoid. On the other hand, abandoning the importance of light to the photographic

event compromises the multi-stage account's theoretical rigour and makes the account too permissive.

5 Conclusion

Wilson's multi-stage account has proven to be influential within philosophical writing on photography, and the paper she has presented here is demonstrative of why. By locating the defining feature of photography in the photographic event, rather than in strict notions of causality, as single-stage views like Scruton's suggest, Wilson's view is able to provide a theoretically principled way for philosophy to accommodate the claims of practicing photographers.

However, as I have argued, this strength of the multi-stage account faces a challenge from emerging artforms, such as videogame photography, that are increasingly accepted by the photographic art world, but do not seem to be easily accommodated by the theoretical commitments of the multi-stage account. Such artforms present a dilemma for the multi-stage account: it either compromises its theoretical rigour or it compromises its ability to neatly accommodate first-order practice. I would suggest that neither of these directions are palatable. Diluting the theoretical commitments of the multi-stage account leads to a free-for-all regarding what counts as a photograph, and rejecting emerging forms of 'photographic' practice puts the account in a similar position to the scepticism towards first-order practice that it sought to reject. I would argue, therefore, that future work on the multi-stage account should seek to find a more desirable way out of this dilemma, especially given that new technologies employed by photographers could lead to this dilemma being posed by an increasing number of artforms.

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WHAT PHOTOGRAPHY AND MUSIC CAN TELL US ABOUT RENAISSANCE INTARSIA

Claudia Giupponi
Open University

Renaissance intarsia is the practice of combining small pieces of wood to form an image. Historically, some art historians classified intarsia as a sub-genre of painting. I believe this classification is the result of a misunderstanding of the practice. To show that intarsia is an independent artform, I will argue that intarsia has a complex mode of production that requires production in stages, distinguishing it from painting. I then draw on Dawn M. Wilson's target article to shed light on the close collaboration between the artist, who designs the images, and the intarsiatore, the specialized carpenter who makes the wooden objects. By understanding the extent to which the artist's images are like a film negative or musical score, and the extent to which the final objects are like a photo or a musical performance, we can see how both roles contribute to the making of the images with independent intentional creative acts.

1 Introduction

Intarsia is a technique that builds complex images using small, intricately cut, coloured pieces of wood. The images are set into larger architectural frameworks that furnish Renaissance churches and palaces across Italy. Works of intarsia were often designed by artists (painters who made the preparatory drawing) and then produced by *intarsiatori* (specialized carpenters who made the wooden image and the frame). Seldom mentioned in art historical or philosophical debates, works of intarsia have been ignored for centuries. Where encountered in the literature, they have been dismissed as either (1) a sub-genre of painting or (2) a craft (Vasari 2019, 90; Trevisan 2011, 10). (1) is grounded in the thought that intarsia, like painting, is simply a way of producing an image. According to (2), intarsia is a craft in the same category as furniture-making. What these two views have in common is that they treat intarsia as a single-stage endeavour, either the production of an image (like a painting) or the production of an object (like a piece of furniture).

Let me immediately put aside the possibility that intarsia is a craft. According to R. G. Collingwood (1938), one of the key properties of works of craft is that they are made following a preconceived plan, and they lack the capacity for expression. Although intarsia is produced following a preparatory drawing, this cannot be considered a complete plan that needs to be followed to the letter. For instance, the *intarsiatore* independently determines the final colour and outline of the wooden pieces, as these details are missing from the preparatory drawing. The intentional activity of the *intarsiatore* is also a form of expression. Different *intarsiatori* may create different works, even if based on the same preparatory drawing. These considerations ultimately need to be developed into a full argument that intarsia is not a craft. But, for reasons of space, I do not consider the issue any further here.

In this paper, then, proceeding with the proposal that intarsia is an art of some kind, I ask whether intarsia is a sub-genre of painting or an independent artform. I argue that viewing intarsia as a sub-genre of painting is a misconception, pivoting around the idea that the aim of intarsia, like that of painting, is purely the production of an image. To appreciate works of intarsia means appreciating two things: 1) the relation between the images and their architectural and sculptural frame; and 2) the interdisciplinary elements of production that are quite distinct from those involved in painting. To experience intarsia as a subgenre of painting necessarily neglects this, resulting in a partial appreciation that does not consider the artform's distinctive aesthetic value.

The argument builds on Dawn M. Wilson's discussion in the target article (2024) and proceeds by analogy. I will first argue that intarsia's production resembles that of photography, then extend Wilson's photography-music analogy to include intarsia. The analogy with photography will demonstrate how intarsia is made by two acts of creation where intentional control is applied in stages. The parallel with music buttresses this claim and explores new ways of thinking about intarsia as an art.

Throughout, I will refer to the intarsia cycle in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, Bergamo. Made between 1522 and 1532, the cycle consists of several decorated panels (and decorated covers) in the Basilica's altar and choir. Until the late eighteenth century, the cycle was not known in mainstream art history. Local historians attributed the work solely to the specialized carpenter who made the final object—that is, to the *intarsiatore*—Giovan Francesco Capoferri. However, in 1793, Lorenzo Lotto's name reappeared as a collaborator of Capoferri, having made the original drawings on which the final work is based (Cortesi-Bosco 1987, 81). This example is not distinctive in having an established painter as a collaborator. Indeed, it is now widely accepted that artists such as Sandro Botticelli, Piero della Francesca, and Antonio and Piero del Pollaiuolo, collaborated with *intarsiatori* to design works of

intarsia (Trevisan 2011, 9, 14; Elkins 1994, 129).

2 Dawn M. Wilson and Ansel Adams on Photography

In the target article, Wilson works with Ansel Adams's account of photography. She explains that Adams's view of photography is connected to the idea that a photographic image is generated when the photo is 'taken' or 'captured' and a photosensitive surface is exposed to light in the camera for a set time.

Adams uses the concept of 'visualization' to support the idea that photography is an art. He defines visualization as an emotional-mental process that allows the photographer to imagine the picture before starting the process so that consequent actions are focused on achieving the desired result. According to him, visualization is linked to the idea that the photographer should be credited with the final photographs, even when they are printed by a different person.

Adams also proposes an evocative analogy between fine art photography and classical music. He believes that visualization is essential for creating fine art photography and that a print from a negative is like a performance from a score:

> ...once it has been set down in a 'score', it can be expressively rendered by different performers, making it possible to create and critically appreciate 'performances' with different qualities. (Wilson 2024, 13)

According to Wilson, Adams endorses a single-stage account of the art. On a single-stage account, the formal features of the object which bear significant artistic value are added through a single act of creation. Wilson interprets Adams this way because he does not distinguish between undeveloped film and developed negative. In fact, he believes that the work is 'fixed' by the initial visualization and captured by the negative.

Wilson argues that such a view does not perfectly fit the proposed anal-

ogy with music. In music, the creativity of the composer and the performer are interdependent. For the analogy to work, the same must be the case between the photographer and whoever develops the negative. Wilson explains:

> For Adams, a fine art photograph is not merely a print from a negative — it is an 'expression' of the photographer's visualization [...] I find it helpful to think of 'expression' as expressive rendering, where 'rendering' gives the print its tangible substance and appearance, thereby contributing properties to the visual image. Comparably, a musical performance could be considered the expressive rendering of a composition. As with musical composition, visualization needs to be understood as one kind of artistic achievement within an extended and interdependent creative process. (Wilson 2024, 24-25)

According to Wilson, to make the analogy work, we need to understand photography as a multi-stage account. That is, we need to see how the making of photography requires two main creative steps:

1. A photographic event where a photographic register is created for a timed interval; there is a causal registration of the light that forms an optical light image.

2. Production of a static visual image using the register from the photographic event. (Wilson 2021, 163)

On Wilson's view, the register is analogous to a musical score, and the production of an image is analogous to a musical performance.

Wilson emphasizes that, with the analogy so understood, we obtain a response to an objection to photography's status as art—the objection that photography is not art because it is mechanical. According to

the objection, the snap of the shutter creates the image, and the rest is simply making the image visible in a print. Wilson thinks that the snap of the shutter, although a creative act, does not create an image but a non-visual 'register'. She holds that the various stages after that enable the kind of intentional intervention necessary for photography to be considered an art. According to Wilson's account, therefore, an image does not exist at the time of exposure. A subsequent production stage is needed before an image can exist. Wilson's multi-stage account reframes the peculiarity of photography and, by showing that it is an intentional multi-staged activity, can say that photographs are not mere mechanical copies of their subjects.

3 Intarsia and Photography

Like photography, intarsia requires a multi-stage account of its making. We have seen how Adams' view of photography is linked to a visualization expressed by the creation of a negative and a printed photograph. Wilson argues that the making of photographs requires three creative steps: 1) the generation of the register; 2) the development of the negative; and 3) printing the photographs. The making of intarsia can seemingly be divided into two steps: 1) the preparatory drawing on paper; and 2) the construction of the wooden object.

Can we understand the making of intarsia as analogous to the making of photography? An analogy of intarsia with Adam's account would suggest that the artist produces something analogous to a visualization, which is the initial drawing, and the *intarsiatore* produces something equivalent to a print, which is the final object. The artist generates the image in the preparatory drawings, which are mechanically copied by an *intarsiatore* in a different medium. If this account is correct, it is legitimate to identify intarsia as a sub-genre of painting.

If, on the other hand, we draw an analogy with Wilson's account, intarsia appears very different. The preparatory drawing is partially analogous to the negative (in that it is visual) and partially analogous to

the register (in that it is the raw material from which additional steps follow to create the work of art). The work of intarsia is analogous to the print in that it is worked up from the preparatory drawings in a process that involves intentional, rather than mechanical, control. As this is a multi-stage process very different from that of painting, it would be a misunderstanding to experience intarsia as a sub-genre of painting.

The second analogy is to be preferred. Even though some works of painting may require preparatory drawings, the passage between the drawing and the painting can be seen as a translation of one image into another. The acts that result in drawings and paintings are just various forms of mark making. In contrast, the creation of intarsia from the drawing is not a simple translation but a transmutation of a drawing into something completely different in nature. The acts necessary to construct a wooden object are not simply another form of mark making. Further, the wooden pieces do not perfectly match the drawing (neither in shape nor in colour), and the *intarsiatore* must do some creative work to transmutate the image into a new medium. This demands a multi-stage view, where the similarity to photography is emphasized by the possibility of accomplishing the two steps by either the same person or two different people. While the painter is seen as a single overriding creator, the fact that two hands are at work in intarsia complicates its attribution to a single author.

Both in photography and intarsia, the two stages determine formal and artistic features of the object that are independent from paintings and drawings. Considered as artistic objects, the negative and the preparatory drawings only make sense when considered as negatives for photographs or as drawings for intarsia. This is because the artist was guided by the fact that he was producing a drawing for a work of intarsia and would have produced a different drawing otherwise. This means that the formal features of the preliminary drawings are independent from simple painting and drawing.

This account generates a puzzle. If I am right, then why has intarsia (a) been classified as a sub-genre of painting and (b) been attributed solely to the *intarsiatore*?

For (a), we could blame Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), who first linked intarsia to painting. He included intarsia in the group of the *arti del disegno* as a variant of painting. Vasari's parallel between painting and intarsia led him to assume that intarsia is just a more complicated way of producing a visual image, which exists once the preliminary drawing is created. His dismissal was abrupt, declaring it a useless complication of painting. According to him, intarsia "has a short life span, because of woodworm and fire, it is therefore a waste of time, despite its majesty and praiseworthiness" Vasari (2019, 90).[1] By considering intarsia in these terms, Vasari demonstrated a misunderstanding of the practice.

This view of intarsia also led to (b), the *intarsiatore* being credited with the work. Looking at the intarsia in Bergamo, Cortesi-Bosco highlights two possible reasons behind Capoferri's sole attribution. Firstly, Capoferri's signature is visible on the panels, while Lotto's contribution lies hidden in the archives. Lotto's participation was in fact only re-discovered in the late eighteenth century when his letters were found. However, Cortesi-Bosco also considers the possibility that Lotto's name was forgotten because his collaboration was not considered as important as the act of making the objects. According to the art historian Massimo Ferretti:

> [...] the merit of the intarsia work belonged exclusively to its author: the collaboration of the painters was considered a purely functional fact, the skill of the work consisting in the technique capable of competing with the brush, identifying the intarsia

1 Italian: "poco durabile per i tarli e per il fuoco, e' tempo buttato invano, ancora che é sia pure lodevole e maestrevole" (my translation).

> with an exquisitely technical variant of painting. (Cortesi-Bosco 1987, 81)[2]

Either way, whether the contribution of the artist was suppressed or forgotten, this type of narrative is linked to the misunderstanding that the making of intarsia requires a single creative process. It is interesting to consider that intarsia represents an exception to normal practice. The expectation would be that the role of technical specialists is omitted in the historical account of a practice, while the contribution of important painters would have normally been recorded.[3]

I am claiming that both (a) and (b) are explained by traditional art historians misunderstanding intarsia. But what justifies this misunderstanding? I suggest that it derives from an incomplete understanding of the close collaboration between the artist and the *intarsiatore* – a collaboration we now better understand through the discovery of Lotto's correspondence with Capoferri. Intarsia aims to combine three major artistic forms— painting, sculpture, and architecture—into one independent artform. Works of intarsia are flat images like paintings, but their pieces are sculpted and then joined. The flat images are then assembled into sculpted frames, and these are fitted into entire rooms of churches and palaces. The images were never meant to be seen individually or separately from the framework around them. If we want to understand the production of intarsia, we should consider how artists and *intarsiatori* shared an idea of the formal features of the final work and contributed with intentional creative acts to realize it.

Here is one example. In one of his letters, Lotto clearly describes his

2 Italian: "il merito dell'opera ad intarsio spettava esclusivamente al suo autore: la collaborazione dei pittori, quando c'era, era ritenuta un fatto puramente funzionale, l'artisticita' dell'opera consistendo soprattutto nella tecnica capace di gareggiare col pennello, identificandosi la tarsia con una variante squisitamente tecnica della pittura" (my translation).

3 Buildings are usually credited to the architect, rather than the builder.

relationship with the *intarsiatore*, implying that, right from the start, it is of close collaboration:

> The explanations would be long on how to adapt the drawings in respect of their dexterity and in respect to what your carpenters can do, since few, or no one, in my opinion, I dare to say, has the same shrewdness of Lorenzo Lotto by nature and his own jealous love for the project [...] I have been repeatedly criticized for too much manual work, due to the importance of the time it requires, but I approach it with ability. (Cortesi-Bosco 1987, 200)[4]

In intarsia, visualization unites the artist and the *intarsiatore* in understanding the composition. The artist is aware of the technical possibilities of the *intarsiatore,* and these have an impact on his work. The preparatory drawing is not simply a trace to be followed, but a text with a specific nature to be interpreted before the making of the wooden object. In the latter, the drawing will find its fulfilment (Cortesi-Bosco 1987, 200).

Considering intarsia as a sub-category of painting presupposes that intarsia's making is a single-stage endeavour. The analogy with Wilson's account of photography permits us to move away from this account and identify intarsia's peculiar two-stage creative process. This means it is possible to consider intarsia as an artform independent from painting.

4 Intarsia and Music

I will further reinforce my account by drawing on an analogy Wilson uses with music. In the case of intarsia, the artist-designer can be compared to the composer, while the *intarsiatore* is compared to the per-

4 Italian: "Lungo saria le narrationi per lo acomodar le istorie rispetto alla gratia de esse etiam quello e quanto possano operar li vostri lignarii, che pochi o nullo altro par mio, ardisco dir, haria tal circuspictioni che ha Lorenzo Lotto per natura, ultra la gelosia della impresa […] El Loco sempre mi ha ripreso de troppo manifatture, per la importancia del tempo che portano et a quallo con dextreza atendo" (my translation).

former.

Cortesi-Bosco described the collaboration between Lotto and Capoferri in these terms:

> Capoferri did not perform a translation, but a transmutation. The light of the paintings 'a guazo' and the chiaroscuro drawings of Lotto's stories have in fact been transmuted into the mobile, changing light of the coloured wood, acquiring a new reality. In the realization of this, the director and interpreter Capoferri, endowed with singular symphony, on the one hand, the work of Lotto, which led him to his deep understanding, on the other the wood, which allowed him to enhance the possibility of bright chromatic rendering as a function of the full implementation of the invention. (Cortesi-Bosco 1987, 200)[5]

Wilson claims that, in music, the creativity of the composer and the performer are interdependent. The same happens in intarsia. Even though Capoferri was appointed director of the project, in his letters, Lotto wrote that it was he who recommended Capoferri as his partner (Cortesi-Bosco 1987, 200). He did so because Lotto understood Capoferri's skills and, like a composer, could visualize how he could realize his ideas; he could already 'hear the music of his performance'. According to Ferretti, Lotto could make this understood by Capoferri because the latter knew that the realization of the intarsia was not simply a mechanical transfer of drawings onto panels. Instead, it was a matter of perceiving the drawings and connecting them with the simplicity of the

5 Italian: "Capoferri non ha operato una traduzione, ma una trasmutazione. La luce dei dipinti 'a guazo' delle storie e dei disegni a chiaroscuro delle 'imprese' di Lotto, s'é infatti trasmutata nella mobile, cangiante luce delle essenze lignee colorate, acquistando nuova realtá. Nella realizzazione di ció, direttore ed interprete fu Capoferri, dotato di singolare sinfonia, da un lato con l'opera di Lotto, che lo portarono alla sua profonda comprensione, dall'altro con il materiale ligneo, che gli consentirono di valorizzare al massimo le possibilita' di resa cromatica luminosa in funzione della piena attuazione dell'invenzione" (my translation).

wooden material (Ibid., 102).

The parallel between music and intarsia allows us to say that the preparatory drawings are like a score, while the panels are like a performance. In music, both composition and performance have distinct artistic qualities. The same can be said of intarsia. Both drawings and panels have artistic value. As Wilson says:

> The art of classical music is not the creation of a written score, plus a performance. It is the creation of a composition, which is manifested in a written score, and in performances from the score where aesthetic qualities of both the performance and the composition can be appreciated. (2024, 24)

By analogy, intarsia is not the simple creation of a drawing and the final wooden object. It is the creation of something like a composition, which manifests in both the drawings and the objects. The aesthetic qualities of each are visible and can be appreciated in the other. It may be possible to appreciate the drawings individually, but for a full experience, they need to be appreciated as realized in an object. In the same way, examining a score will only give an impoverished experience of music. Therefore, the score needs to be realized in a performance.

We might challenge the intarsia-music parallel by claiming that, while in music it is quite common to have different performances of the same composition, intarsia has always produced a single performance. However, this is due to practical rather than theoretical reasons. New performances of old intarsia designs are possible, but, in general, they are neither necessary nor desirable. Intarsia were made to fit into specific spaces. Once each space was filled, there was no need to execute a new performance, even if these were possible in theory. The parallel between music and intarsia allows us to draw philosophical insights to intarsia, by showing how different artisans could express the original drawn designs in different ways.

5 Conclusion

Thanks to Wilson's target article, photography has been disentangled from a philosophical account of the artform that casts doubt on its artistic value. Wilson has been able to show that there are a set of intentional artistic acts involved in the creation of a photograph, arguing that the 'taking' of a photograph is anything but a mechanical act.

Adapting her multi-stage account of photography, I have characterized intarsia as an independent artform. Vasari's superficial dismissal of the practice mistakenly considered it just another way of drawing and painting an image. Although not perfectly matching the case of intarsia, Wilson's paper helps clarify intarsia's production process. By applying a multi-stage account to intarsia, it is possible to understand the complex collaboration between artist and creator as the one between composer and performer. As in classical music, most works of intarsia are made by two artistic contributions, which require a common visualization of the final composition.

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PHOTOGRAPHY AND MUSIC
ANSEL ADAMS MEETS CAGE, RICHTER AND RICHARDS

Mikael Pettersson
Lingnan University

Ansel Adams pointed to an analogy between photography and music, in particular to similarities between, on the one hand, negatives and prints in photography, and, on the other hand, scores and performances in classical music. Dawn M. Wilson uses her 'multi-stage view' of photography to (*among other things*) *make the analogy more precise. She also invites others to expand on the analogy. In this piece I do so by, first, discussing darkness in photography and silence in music; and, second, covers or versions in music and in photography.*

1 Introduction

In what ways is photography similar to music? This might seem like a risky question, as – as Plato pointed out, or at least what Plato lets Protagoras and Parmenides say – everything is like everything else, and in endless ways. Ansel Adams, Dawn M. Wilson reminds us (2024), pointed to an analogy between, on the one hand, scores and performances in classical music, and on the other, negatives and prints in photography. Wilson uses this analogy to further illuminate her 'multi-stage' account of photography, and invites others to expand on the analogy between music and photography. In this short piece, I take up the invitation to do so by discussing some puzzling cases in music and photography: (i) darkness in photography and silence in music; and (ii) covers or versions in music and photography.

2 What is it for a picture to be a photograph? An orthodox/traditional view

What is it for a picture to be a photographic picture? For, surely, photographs are pictures, but of a special kind, although some might seem to have denied that photographs are pictures.[1] The following is a quote from Fred Dretske (2003), and it is useful partly because it is not from a discussion primarily about photography. Instead, Dretske takes how photography allegedly works as an uncontroversial datum to cast light on how perception works.

> Think about photographs. What makes a photograph of a yellow station wagon a photograph *of* a yellow station wagon—indeed, a photograph of *my* (not your) yellow station wagon—are facts about the causal origin of the image on the paper. If the film from which this image was produced was exposed by light reflected from my yellow station wagon [...] then it is a picture of my

1 Roger Scruton (1981) suggests that a photograph 'presents' its subject matter, but does not 'represent' it.

> yellow station wagon. If the light came from your car, then it is a picture of your car, and it would be a picture of your car even if it were indistinguishable from a picture of mine—a perfect forgery, as it were. What makes a photograph of x is not that it looks like x. It may not. [...] A photograph of a yellow station wagon taken in funny light, at an unusual angle, and at great distance may not look like a yellow station wagon at all. [...] What makes it a picture of a yellow station wagon – in fact, a picture of *my* (not your) yellow station wagon – is simply the fact that it is my (not your) car that is at the other end of an appropriate causal chain. It is my car that (via camera, film, developing, etc.) affected the paper. (Dretske 2003, 156-7)

Three claims from this quote are worth highlighting in particular, all of which I think are orthodoxy, or at least a traditional view. First, photography is a causal medium: only things that have causally interacted with a photo can be part of the photograph's content, or what it is of. Second—and this is more visible in a footnote (fn. 3)—photography is a *merely* causal medium, where the intentions of a photographer play a different role than those of a picture-maker making a hand-made image. That is, what shows up in a photograph does so independently of what a photographer thinks about what she sees through the viewfinder, an idea carefully developed in Kendall Walton's (1984) so-called *transparency thesis*. Third, Dretske holds that what a photograph is a photograph of has little to do with how it *looks*, and instead, causal chains matter more. Dretske refers to Nelson Goodman's (1976) example of a photograph of a black horse. The horse cannot be seen in the picture, but which is still, allegedly, part of the photograph's content: "If I tell you I have a picture of a certain black horse, and then I produce a snapshot in which he has come out a light speck in the distance, you can hardly convict me of lying; but you may well feel that I have misled

you" (Goodman 1976, 29).[2]

3 What is it for a picture to be a photograph? Less orthodox views 1

Less orthodox views of photography might take issue, in particular, with the role causation is given in the (orthodox/traditional) view exemplified by the quote from Dretske. Again, on traditional theories of photography, only things that have caused a photographic image can be what the photograph is of. Two kinds of apparent photographic content might be counterexamples: fictions and absences, respectively. According to Paloma Atencia-Linares (2012), photographs can be photographs of fictional beings and scenes. For instance, Wanda Wultz' *Io + Gatto* (1932) is, on Atencia-Linares view, a photograph of a cat-woman, although the cat-woman did not cause the image; fictional as she is, she cannot cause anything. But, so Atencia-Linares contends, as the image is produced by 'photographic means', what we can see in the image—i.e. the cat-woman—is what the image is a photograph of.[3]

Absences pose a similar problem, as their causal efficacy is somewhat unclear. Can, say, a hole in my pocket—something not being there—be the cause of my losing my keys? We do at least speak this way, sometimes, but again, a hole is a kind of nothingness and nothingness and causation might seem to be an unholy alliance. But, photographs seem to be able to capture things not being there. Umbo's *Mystery of the Street* (1928) is a photograph of shadows. Shadows are plausibly best thought of as being absences of light and it is unclear whether light *not being there* can cause anything. Physical objects can be seen, and indeed photographed, because they have surfaces which can act upon our

2 Walton would possibly disagree, as one reason photographs are transparent, on his view, is that they transmit what he calls 'real similarities'. See, Walton (1984, 270–273).

3 Gregory Currie (2008) argues that photographs can be of ficta, but not by photographic means. For further discussion of the 'fictional incompetence' or otherwise of photography, see also Dan Cavedon-Taylor (2010).

sensory organs (or on a camera), but, shadows have no surfaces. As Roy Sorensen puts it, "no part of a shadow acts. Shadows are creatures of omission. Shadows are where the inaction is" (2008, 74).

Other absences might seem even more difficult to capture by photographic means. A shadow, even if causally inefficacious, still has a 'look', or an 'outline shape'.[4] Other absences lack such 'looks'. In 1993–1994, Kowloon Walled City in Hong Kong was demolished. It used to be an extremely densely populated area of Kowloon, with a history dating back to The Song Dynasty. An estimated fifty thousand people lived in basically one city block—roughly 7 acres. Today one can go and see, and indeed take photographs of, the absent Walled City. What is left of previously one of the most densely populated areas on earth is an absence and nothing to see of the Walled City, except its absence.[5]

These examples of possible photographic content might be problems for the kind of orthodox or traditional view embodied in the quote from Dretske. A more fundamental criticism from less traditional theorists would be how Dretske (and others) thinks of what he puts in brackets: '(via camera, film, developing, etc.)'; or, perhaps better, taking issue with the fact that traditional views put these elements of photography precisely in brackets, leading to a 'snapshot view' of photography.

4 What is it for a picture to be a photograph? Less orthodox views 2: lights, camera, action—and events

4.1 Lights and events

As an alternative and in opposition to the traditional, snapshot view of photography, Dawn M. Wilson has in several papers, including the one in the present issue, developed a multi-stage account of photography.

4 For an account of depiction in terms of 'outline shape', see Robert Hopkins (1998).

5 For further suggestions regarding 'absence tourism' with respect to seeing and photographing absences, see, Roy Sorensen (2018).

Two details of Wilson's picture of photography are: first, that a photograph's origin lies in a 'photographic event', which is, roughly speaking, light-sensitive material being exposed to light from a scene, not yet resulting in a photograph proper, but in a 'register'; second, another stage is 'rendering', resulting in what is a visible image produced from the 'register'.[6]

What is a photographic event? As Wilson puts the idea in the current paper, "[t]he production of the image is a multi-stage process that necessarily includes the registration of light during a photographic event, while extending, concertina-fashion, to activities before and after that event." (2024, 41)

Is light *necessary* for producing a photograph? I think it is not, and here an example relating to Adams' analogy between photography and music might be illuminating, although it is about darkness and silence.

John Cage famously wrote a piece of music consisting of 4 minutes and 33 seconds of silence, in three movements, i.e., *4'33"*.[7] When David Tudor sat down at the piano and started 'playing' Cage's piece in New York in 1952, nothing much could be heard, as it is arguably completely silent. Some sixty years later, a death metal cover of Cage's piece was recorded by the band Dead Territory. In their version of Cage's piece, nothing can be heard, either. I played this recording to students in a course on photography, apropos the question whether there could be photos of absences. Or rather, I *attempted* to play the recording, but the AV system did not work, so my students could not hear anything of the piece,

6 For a recent version of these ideas, apart from the one in the current paper in this Journal, see Wilson (2022, especially 144-148).

7 Is silence really all what this piece is of, or consists of? Some would/have argue(d) that the piece is also of environmental or 'accidental' sounds. For a recent illuminating discussion, and a defence of 4'33'' as being silent, see Julian Dodd (2018). Dodd argues that 4'33 is not music, but instead conceptual art. It matters little in the present context whether it is or is not music. Whatever it is, it is silent. I use the example only as an illustration of the difference between representing nothing, and not representing anything. Nothing much hangs on whether 4'33 is music, for my purposes.

not even its silence. The students were disappointed, and rightfully so, because all they could hear was the silence in the lecture hall, not the recorded silence in Dead Territory's studio. Jonathan Westphal points out that there is a difference between a recording of an absence, and an absence of recording, although the result might be indistinguishable, i.e. silence (Westphal 2011, 193). As to the failed attempt to let students hear the silence in Dead Territory's studio, one might add that there is a difference between a playback of an absence, and an absence of playback.

A photographer, inspired by Cage, might take a photograph of a pitch-dark night sky or, perhaps even better, of a completely dark object. A completely dark object absorbs all light, so there would seem to be no causal traffic between it and the resulting photograph. I submit that the envisioned photograph is indeed a photograph, despite no photographic event having occurred, if this implies that light has to be involved. But maybe Wilson's notion of a photographic event should not be understood as its having to involve light, or a registration of a 'light-image'; maybe it could also involve the registration of a 'darkness-image'. The production of the envisioned absolutely dark photo is still *sensitive* to light: had light been in the scene, it would have shown up in the photo. The photo is sensitive to the absence of light, and not, for instance, of sound. It records darkness, but it cannot record silence.[8]

4.2 Events and actions

I will now consider the notion of rendering in Wilson's account and how actions result in visible images stemming from the photographic event. It is the distinction between a register and a rendering which provides a more solid theoretical foundation to Adams' suggested analogy between on the one hand scores and performances in music, and on the other, negatives and prints in photography. Let us grant that renderings

8 For discussion of photographs of darkness and dark things, see Sorensen (2008, 29, 206) and Pettersson (2012; 2017).

can be, according to the suggested analogy, performances of a work. A question that arises is: how 'far away', as it were, from the register can the rendering be to still count as the same work? In line with Wilson's invitation to expand on Adams' analogy, I will take a detour via the topic of covers in music.

An intriguing case of covers in music is British band The Verve's 'Bitter Sweet Symphony'. Although the song was first presented as an original, new song by The Verve, its composers were said to be The Verve's Richard Ashcroft alongside Mick Jagger and Keith Richards of The Rolling Stones. The short explanation of the credits to Jagger and Richards goes as follows. In 1965, Mick Jagger and Keith Richards wrote the song 'The Last Time', their first original A-single in the UK. Not long after, the Andrew Oldham Orchestra (formed by previous manager of The Rolling Stones, Andrew Loog Oldham) recorded 'The Last Time'; an instrumental (more precisely, orchestral) version of it which does not sound very much like the original, adding, for example, a strings section not included in the original version. The Verve was allowed to sample parts of the latter instrumental version but, according to lawsuits, incorporated too much, and in the end had to include Jagger and Richards as the writers of the song. (Only recently, in 2019, were royalties given 'back' to The Verve.)[9]

Why would or should 'Bitter Sweet Symphony' be said to be composed by Jagger and Richards? One reason would seem to be that the song originated in an event, namely a sound event—the recording, or registering of 'The Last Time' as played by The Rolling Stones—and then rendered by The Verve into something very different. And despite the fact that what The Verve rendered into a song sounds very different from the original, it was (so the initial lawsuits said) still that song.

One may be reminded, here, of comparable issues in relation to photography. Recall Goodman's claim (cited by Dretske) that a photograph

9 For details regarding this event, and other details of the story, see Tsioulcas (2019).

does not need to look like much of what it is of in order to be a photograph of it. So long as there is, in Dretske's idiom, an appropriate causal chain leading to the image, it matters less how the image looks. Similarly, one could argue, so long as there is an appropriate causal chain leading to 'Bitter Sweet Symphony' from The Rolling Stones' 'The Last Time', it matters less whether the two pieces sound much alike in order for them to be the same song or not.

The question as to whether a photograph needs to look like what it is a photograph of, therefore, has a history, but has received new momentum precisely in relation to Wilson's multi-stage account of photography. Again, on the multiple-stage account, first a register is recorded; another stage is rendering so that a photograph proper is produced. As indicated above, one question that arises is what constraints could plausibly govern the rendering, so that it is still a rendering of the register. A relevant case is Gerhard Richter's image *Betty*.

In 1978, Richter took a photograph of his daughter Betty. Ten years later, by projecting a slide of the photograph and tracing the image, he rendered a visual image by means of painting on canvas. Is the resulting image a photograph? Richter himself thought so, and Dominic McIver Lopes, in his discussion of this picture, agrees (2016, 89-91). The information registered in a photographic event can be made into visual displays in various ways, for example, in a darkroom, via a printer and, as in the case of Richter, by projecting a slide and applying paint to a canvas. Of course, Richter's way of producing the display differs from, say, a smartphone generating an image, or a printer, in being mind-dependent. But this, so Lopes contends, is not decisive for the question of whether the resulting image is a photograph, so long as Richter was 'guided by' the original register. How much, and what kind of guidance is needed for an image to be a rendering of a register? Diarmuid Costello offers the following challenge regarding how far away a rendering can be from a register, and still be a rendering of that register:

> Imagine the following case: Using an opaque projector, Richter projects a postcard of Kölner Dom onto a canvas and sets about painting in the image. Almost finished, he begins to 'blur' the image, by dragging solvent across its wet surface. […] The resulting image is a largely gray monochrome […]. Like *Betty*, it originates in a photographic event […] But if it is a photograph, what is it a photograph of? Can it still be described as a photograph—let alone 'a photograph of Kölner Dom'? (Costello 2017, 446)

Is the envisioned photograph *of* The Kölner Dom? I think we might be of two minds here, as were lawyers in The Verve case. Origin and causality seemingly played an important role, but matters were actually more complex than in my short version of the Bitter Sweet Symphony story, as similarity did get involved in the lawsuits. A musicologist involved in the lawsuit said the vocals of 'Bittersweet Symphony' resembled a half-time version of the melody of 'The Last Time'. But, I would think no one would have noticed this had it not been for the causal story of the production of 'Bittersweet Symphony'. With respect to Costello's Kölner Dom, a plausible thought, I think, is that it is *not* of the Dom, as it does not *look like* the Dom. But here we are back with Plato's thought that everything is like everything, and in endless ways, brought up earlier. One could view this stand-off of intuitions, if it is one, as what Patrick Maynard (2007) calls – in a different context of photography debates – a (Platonic) 'photo aporia'. The Platonic aporia is not really a 'no way', but an invitation for others to think more. I believe the 'way out' of the possible impasse is to think of photographs necessarily involving capturing the 'looks' of things[10]—unless, as in the case of absent Walled City, they do not display any look.

Looks do matter in photography.[11] But sometimes nothing can be seen. In the following section, I move on to cases of music and photographs

10 Cf. Costello's discussion of his imagined Richter photo (Costello 2017, 447).

11 On looks in photography, see Pettersson (2012) and the references therein.

where we apprehend nothingness: holes in pictures and holes in sound.

5 Silent film: Holes in sound and vision

As Cage's *4'33"* arguably illustrates, music can be absolutely silent and, so I have suggested, photographs can be absolutely dark, and 'of' that darkness that they record, or register, though being, as the etymology has it, 'light writing'. More situated silences in music often play a role for rhythm and indeed the sound of the music, in being absences of sound, or pauses. Think, for instance, of the opening bars of AC/DC's 'Highway to Hell'. The song would not sound as it does sound if it did not include the pauses between the chords, and if we did not hear those situated silences.[12]

Pauses in music, or in any temporally extended sound sequence, can fruitfully be seen as holes in that sound.[13] Are there comparable 'pauses' in photographs? According to one influential idea, images, photographic or otherwise, are 'saturated' in a way other representations, e.g., mental imagery or words, might not be. Rudolf Arnheim expresses this idea in the following way:

> Within the frame of a painting every spot is positively present, first as a material part of the paint-covered canvas and secondly as a substantial element of the pictorial construction. In a completed painting, the units of the composition vary as to their apparent density and also as to their spatial position within the figure-ground hierarchy, but none of them may give us the impression of an empty gap, a hole torn in the pictorial tissue. (Arnheim 1948, 33)

I think Arnheim is overly optimistic in claiming that 'every spot is positively present'. Consider Fan Ho's *A Sail* (1957). There are dark spots in

12 Here I am heavily indebted to Ian Phillips' (2013) discussion of hearing pauses in music.

13 See again Phillips (2013, especially 341).

the image, either because the fishing boat cast a shadow on the water, or they are what Sorensen calls 'para-reflections' (Sorensen 2008, Ch. 7). It would depend on where the sun is in relation to the boat and it is difficult to tell from the photograph alone. Whatever the case may be, there is a sense in which the image is silent about portions of the sea, namely whatever else is located in those areas are invisible. One could of course say that this example does not challenge Arnheim's claim that in a picture 'every spot is positively present', but if so, one has to say that some spots that are positively present represent something absent, at least absences of light.

A clearer challenge to Arnheim's claim is Ned Block's (1983) suggestion, developed by Dominic Lopes (1996) in the context of philosophy of depiction, that images may be 'non-committal' to various portions of a scene. An illustrating case might be a tattoo on one's skin, say, an 'Ouroboros Snake' tattoo. In such an image, we see the snake biting its own tail. Inside the circle made by the shape of the snake, there is a hole, of sorts. Is it a 'hole in the pictorial tissue'? I am not sure. It does not seem implausible to view the absence as depicted empty space, which the tattoo artist depicts by not making any holes in the tissue/flesh of the tattooed person. But then a question arises as to whether empty space is also depicted around the snake, where the artist has not made any marks either.[14]

A third kind of 'pause' is where the 'pictorial tissue' is indeed torn, as in scenes from Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* (1966). This pause does not really challenge Arnheim's claim, which, again, concerns 'completed' images, but it is nonetheless interesting in its own right. The film, roughly halfway through, splits apart, starts burning, and there is nothing more to see for a while except a hole in the film. This is really a pause in the picture, in the sense that the film is no longer, in Block's

14 For further discussion of this issue, see Pettersson (2018).

idiom, committal to anything, not even absences.[15]

6 Coda: Covers in photography, and concluding (negative) remarks

Covers in music can be of various kinds.[16] Some versions take on a new meaning because they sound very different from the original. The Californian band The Red House Painters made a wrist-slasher of Kiss' 'Shock Me'. The lyrics 'Shock me, make me feel better/ Shock me, put on your black leather / Shock me, we can come together', when sung accompanied by melancholy chords, take on a significantly different meaning than when sung by Ace Frehley in Kiss' original metal version. At other times, a cover version might take on a new meaning despite sounding very similar to the original simply due to context—e.g. due to the gender or race of the respective artists.[17] Adams, as Wilson discusses, was happy to have other people to render/perform his negatives/registers in different ways, resulting in appreciably varying renderings. But photographs can take on different meanings even though they look more or less indistinguishable from previous renderings, and are thus similar to the kind of musical cover where context changes the meaning of the piece. One case in point is Sherrie Levine's 'After Walker Evans'. What Levine did was to photograph photographs in a catalogue of Evans, so Levine's series—if it should be seen as a 'photographic cover', and I think it could usefully be seen as such—is perhaps best seen as a cover, where the context (historical factors etc.) gives new meaning to the original. As Stephen Davies puts it, the works 'differ in their *contents* [...] Sherrie Levine's photographs make an art-political point about the fact that women typically gain entry to the gallery via the works of

15 I am indebted to a discussion that John Kulvicki initiated on social media regarding holes in pictures.

16 For illuminating discussion see, P.D. Magnus (2022).

17 For interesting discussion regarding these issues (for instance, of covers of Bob Dylan's 'Just Like A Woman' by female artists), see Magnus (2022, 61-62, Ch. 3).

male artists, whereas the works she appropriates have no such content' (2006, 63). Again, Adams' analogy primarily addresses how various performances can result in different looks of a composition; Levine's images have more or less the same 'look' as Evans' photos, but they 'say' something completely different.

I will conclude with some 'negative remarks' about what I have not done in this article. Wilson uses the analogy to draw attention to the creative aspects of print-making, and is less interested in the more ontological aspects of the analogy upon which I have focused. Also, I have not said enough about Wilson's 'multi-stage view' of photography, nor about what a photographic event is, and whether light is needed for such an event to occur. Instead, I have mostly focused on the darker and 'silent' bits that might go into the photographic process. Still, I hope that what I have provided is sufficiently similar to, or at least inspired by, Wilson's article, so one can possibly hear some of Wilson's themes through my renditions of them here.[18]

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18 This paper benefitted from funding for a project on photography from Hong Kong's Research Grants Council and was discussed at an online symposium organized by Claire Anscomb in January 2023; I am indebted to the symposiasts, in particular to Claire, and to Dawn Wilson, whose article on Adams was a 'target article' at the symposium. The paper was also presented at The Higher Seminar in Aesthetics at Uppsala and I am grateful for comments and suggestions from participants, in particular, Elisabeth Schellekens, Guy Dammann, Paisley Livingston, Jeremy Page, Axel Rudolphi, and Nick Wiltsher. Written comments from Ben Blumson, Raf De Clercq and Paisley Livingston on a draft of the paper, and email correspondence with Roy Sorensen, helped a lot. Thanks also to two anonymous referees for the journal.

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COVERS, CONCRETENESS, AND CRAFT
A REPLY TO PETTERSSON, CAMPION AND GUIPPONI

Dawn M. Wilson
University of Hull

Mikael Pettersson raises concerns about absent light because traditional theories suppose that a photograph is a causal trace of light and there can be no causal trace where there is no light. I explain how a multi-stage account can handle these concerns. Pettersson explores the music-photography analogy by considering cover versions in music but wonders whether every rendering of a register must count as a photograph. To evaluate examples, I claim that we need contextual information, which may include artist testimony. However, Ben Campion argues that a dilemma arises if this methodological principle is applied to videogame photography, a practice which involves making images from screenshots of computer-generated scenes. Artist testimony may tell us that such work is photography, but this claim conflicts with my theoretical commitments. I argue that the dilemma will seem plausible only if videogame 'photography' is affiliated with a single-stage account. Affiliation with the concreteness of a multi-stage account is far from plausible, so my commitments can be preserved. In her case study of Renaissance intarsia, Claudia Guipponi successfully appeals to artistic testimony to show how the music-photography analogy can extend to another artform. To support her position, I query the distinction she draws between art and craft and recommend that she accept the account of craft and creativity offered by Ansel Adams.

1 Pettersson on Absences and Covers

Asking "Is light *necessary* for producing a photograph?" (2024, 88), Pettersson answers "I think it is not," seemingly at odds with Campion, who defends light as essential for photography. Conciliation is possible. When he says that the 'photographic event', at the heart of the multi-stage account, should make room for darkness as well as light, Pettersson is arguing that a photographic event needs to be understood counterfactually in terms of photosensitivity, rather than limited to the causal effects of light alone. As he puts it:

> ...maybe Wilson's notion of a photographic event should not be understood as its having to involve light, or a registration of a 'light-image'; maybe it could also involve the registration of a 'darkness-image'. The production of the envisioned absolutely dark photo is still *sensitive* to light: had light been in the scene, it would have shown up in the photo. The photo is sensitive to the absence of light, and not, for instance, of sound. It records darkness, but it cannot record silence. (2024, 89)

I agree. To register the attendance of school pupils, I might put a tick for an attendee and a cross for an absentee, but I could instead leave the box empty for an absentee. If a photosensitive surface does not causally register absence of light by undergoing material change, it can nonetheless counterfactually register absence of light by failing to undergo change. If this is correct, I assume the respondents concur that light is essential for photography insofar as a photographic event depends on light sensitivity.

Counterfactual analysis implies that material properties are always relevant to understanding the registration of light and darkness during a photographic event. Construed this way, concretely rather than abstractly, a photographic event is a time-constrained interaction between some particular array, typically consisting of visible light or

other wavelengths of electromagnetic radiation channeled from a scene, and some particular photosensitive surface. This has broader implications than Pettersson himself notes, because photography is not limited to the visible light spectrum. A visually dark optical array may fail to register on one type of film stock, but on a surface with different sensitivity – for example infrared film – the same array and exposure time may yet result in a register that can be rendered as an image. Temperature and humidity can affect outcomes. Moreover, given different concrete circumstances, objects visibly reflected in an array may not register. Thanks to slow optics, long exposure times and emulsion with low sensitivity, Eugène Atget's photographs of Paris show motionless streets and buildings. People, horses and carriages in motion are ghostly apparitions, or entirely absent from the picture, although they were present in the optical image during the photographic event. On a multi-stage account, an image invites viewers to take interest in the photographic event as well as the photographed scene. To understand a photographic event concretely, the testimony of the photographer is at times a necessary guide to the production process.

Pettersson's contemplations on presence and absence underline that photography is characterized both causally and counterfactually. When I conceived the notion of a photographic event, I had in mind that photography is concerned to record – or, as I now prefer to say, register – the presence and absence of light, typically as a differentiated pattern, during some specific time interval. Limiting cases are the registration of undifferentiated light and undifferentiated dark. If the former oversaturates a photosensitive surface and the latter has no causal effect, this information may have minimal utility for producing an image, but both registers carry counterfactual information that may have other utility. As Pettersson put it: "had light been in the scene it would have shown up in the photo" (2024, 89). The same is true for darkness. A rendering from the register can still tell us something about the photographic event, even if no scene is depicted.

On a traditional view, where causation is necessary and sufficient for depiction, a photographic image can depict a photographed scene irrespective of any visual resemblance, though it can depict only those objects that leave a causal trace. Even when an additional requirement for visual resemblance is satisfied, Pettersson notes that this traditional account still faces two questions: how much is a photograph required to 'look like' the scene to count as a depiction? And how can a photograph depict something that leaves no causal trace, such as a fictional object or the absence of an object? These difficulties lead Pettersson to favour a multi-stage account. Indeed, my account rebuts the idea that a photographic image is a causal 'imprint' of the photographed scene, so denies the traditional view of photographic depiction (Wilson 2022). It can deal with fictions and, granted a photographic event that is sensitive to the presence and absence of light, as Pettersson advocates, it can also deal with absences. I will elaborate further.

Pettersson is curious whether there is any equivalent to 'situated silences' (2024, 93) in photography, so I have a suggestion. When black specks appear on a positive print, they correspond to gaps between grains in the negative image, which in turn correspond to an absence of light during the initial photographic event. As Adams states, "it should be pointed out that the dark 'grain' specks visible in the print are actually the spaces between the grains of the negative; since negative grains withhold light during printing, they appear white in the print" (1981, 19). Pettersson has drawn several parallels between sound and vision, so it is fitting to note that, in photographic terms, visible grain in a developed image is known as 'noise'. Ironically, in the corresponding positive print, it should be considered 'silence'.

This seemingly trivial point has deeper significance. When a camera shutter opens but light is absent from a region of the optical array, no sensitivity specks will form on the chemical register. If the register is chemically developed and fixed, that region will rinse clear. Regions

where light was registered develop dense silver grains, visible as black clusters in a negative image. This is why, for the negative-positive process in which Adams and Weston were masters of their craft, the absence of light is vital to producing fine art. In the darkroom, a negative is used as a stencil to project an array onto a photosensitive surface, and areas of the stencil that occlude light are necessary to give the final print its representational features. When the register is developed, those areas where light was absent, because occluded by the stencil, show up on the positive print as bright areas and highlights that correspond to objects that were present in the photographed scene. This situation sets up an argument supporting the multi-stage account.

On a traditional view, all representation strictly requires a causal imprint of objects that emit or reflect light, making absent light a philosophical problem, as Pettersson indicates. For Adams and Weston, occlusion of light during a photographic event is essential to their darkroom art. If a traditional causal theory were correct and every photographic image strictly depicts whichever photographed objects leave a causal trace, then every Adams fine art photograph would be a depiction of light emitted by his darkroom enlarger, partially occluded by a negative. If instead we recognize that his fine art prints are depictions of mountains, trees and rivers, the causal theory is implausible. Thanks to the occluding properties of the negative, some light is absent during the darkroom photographic event and precisely that absence enabled Adams to create expressive pictures of landscapes. A multi-stage account of photography, I argue, can handle the apparent problem of absent light. It also licenses photographic depiction.

There is more to a photographic picture than a causal trace, because further rendering stages contribute properties to any visual image. However, Pettersson asks how 'far away' (2024, 90) from the register can the rendered image be and still count as the same work? He is prompted to raise this question because musical covers pose ontological problems

without simple answers. Art photography is in the same position but no worse for it, as we shall see.

In chemical photography, the multi-stage account delivers a stringent answer: a photographic register has precisely one rendering. This is when exposed film is developed and fixed to produce a negative, or when paper exposed in the darkroom is developed and fixed to produce a print. Once the photographic register has been rendered, it cannot be restored to its previous state. This limitation clashes with the generous spirit of Adams's analogy. Its musical equivalent would be a written score that could be performed only once, but this odd outcome is not a reductio if we follow where it leads. Firstly, I concluded that photo-electrical photography is the true heir to Adams's analogy, because a digital register is a score that can be performed multiple times. Secondly, I suggest that darkroom photography is analogous to musical 'sampling' because it uses an initial performance, the negative photograph, to create a new performance, the printed photograph. The initial performance can be sampled anew every time the negative is projected from an enlarger or contact printed. Arguably, all of Adams's fine art is creative sampling, although not every print that samples a work counts as a performance of the artwork. Adams is explicit that many photographs produced in the workflow do not count as fine art prints: work prints are rehearsals, not performances. For him, a print is fine art only when it expressively renders a visualisation: it must be a creative performance, not merely a compliant performance.

Pettersson's question about covers concerns authenticity. Edward Weston believed that an authentic print had to exactly match his visualisation; Brett Weston believed that only he could authentically print his own work. For these artists, an authentic photograph would be a performance that complies with the score, but their ideal for compliance would have to go even further than this: strict 'compliance' would limit performances to a single authorized interpretation. Although

compliance with a score is important for classical performances, other types of music can be appreciated without considering compliance conditions. This is why a wider range of analogies should be explored. My multi-stage account shows that a register, or score, produced during the photographic event is not the entire locus of a photographic artwork. It is not even a photograph (Wilson 2023). Insisting too strongly on compliance with the register risks restoring the single-stage idea that the artwork is a photograph created at the moment of exposure. We can afford to downplay what Adams tells us about the score, because his idea that prints are expressive performances is the most fruitful aspect of his analogy. Authentic and inauthentic rendering is sometimes beside the point. I think there is no determinate answer to Pettersson's question, for music or for photography, instead there is a methodological challenge for philosophers to understand visualisation and many other types of photographic art practice, so that examples can be discussed case by case.

The single-stage conception of photography makes it easy for philosophers, theorists, and critics to undervalue the testimony of practitioners: if an image were in fact causally 'captured' at the moment of exposure, intentionality would have to be entirely peripheral to that causal stage, irrespective of what artists claim. Reconceiving the process as multi-stage grants that artistic intentionality can be integral at every stage: before, during and after the photographic event. There can also be deliberate choices to remove intentionality from the process and this too can have aesthetic significance. In my article, I argued that knowledgeable testimony from photography practitioners is valuable for understanding their creative contributions throughout the production process and consequently is relevant to critically appreciating their art.

2 Campion's Dilemma

I did not explore whether artist testimony bears on ontological or definitional questions about what counts as a photograph because I

set aside that debate. Campion is drawn to the questions I set aside. He surveys emerging types of 'videogame photography' and asks, "whether these practices are accurately described by the term *photography*." (2024, 59) He initially claims that these can, at most, be categorized as virtual or simulated photography, distinct from physical or real photography; but then considers whether artist testimony offers good reason to collapse the distinction. This would explode 'photography' as an ontological category and perhaps make any definition meaningless.

Pettersson is also concerned about a kind of category explosion. In his discussion of musical covers, he worries that every sampling of an image rendered from a register might count as a photograph, no matter how the visual display is produced. Moreover, this could imply that all images that sample a photographic image and likewise all 'covers' of a photographic image might have to count as the 'same' photograph, even if they have entirely different visual properties. These would be problems if the occurrence of a photographic event in an artefact's causal history were sufficient for it to be a photograph, or for different items to count as the same photograph, but I will allay this concern.

Campion attributes to me the idea that we can 'test' whether an image is a photograph "by asking if an image contains a 'photographic event' in its causal history" (2024, 49), and that this may be "the defining trait of photography" (2024, 50). This is not to say that a photographic event is both necessary and sufficient. He notes that "the necessity of further processes, such as chemical or digital processing, is central to the multi-stage account" (Campion 2024, 53). The mistaken notion that a photographic event alone could be sufficient underpins the traditional supposition that an invisible latent image created during exposure is identical with the visible image created during development. I have refuted this supposition elsewhere, as Campion discusses. Pettersson's concern that every 'cover' rendered from a register must count as the same photograph can be dispelled the same way. There can never

be any rendering from a register that is identical with a 'photograph' created during exposure, no matter what its visible properties. Images acquire visual properties during the rendering process, and sometimes it will be visually evident that two images share a photographic event in their causal history; sometimes only contextual information will reveal this fact (see Wilson 2012, 105-7). Informed testimony from the photographer is often exactly what we need. Its value can be illustrated in Pettersson's own example, a photograph from the series *After Walker Evans*. Sherrie Levine can direct aesthetic appreciation to multiple layers of photographic events subversively embedded in the causal history of this art object, despite her image visually resembling other straightforward reproductions of Walker Evans's well-known photograph.

Pettersson and Campion both target a narrow question: 'does *x* count as a photograph?' I sought to make room for a different question: 'is *x* a rendering from a photographic register?' as this is better suited for appreciating photographic art and attributing credit to artists. However, according to Campion, my theory and methodology generate a dilemma. On one hand, if the multi-stage view is correct, light registration during a photographic event is essential for photography. Campion is willing to defend this position and rightly assumes I will do the same. On the other hand, he suggests, respecting first-order practice obliges me to defer to videogame artists who classify their work as photography, even without light registration. Campion thinks this is where I face a problem: if I want to defend my theoretical commitment to the multi-stage account, then it appears I must give up my methodological commitment to artist testimony. I will respond in depth to both horns of this dilemma.

Firstly, the theoretical horn. Campion assumes that the notion of a photographic event will preserve the distinction between virtual/simulated and physical/real photography. He claims that "we need to retain light as an essential part of the photographic event if the term 'photography'

is to retain its utility as a category" (2024, 60). I agree but prefer a different argument. When Campion defends the multi-stage account, he puts too much emphasis on a simplified notion of the photographic event and construes the registration of light too abstractly. A full defence must consider interrelated, complex stages that are construed concretely.

According to Campion, a register is "chemically or digitally recorded information about the photographed scene" (2024, 53). On my account, complexity and concreteness should be added. A register directly takes information from a light array, typically consisting of a light image optically channelled onto a surface, and it only indirectly takes information from the scene. A light array must be formed before information can be registered and every light image has material properties such as shape, size and sharpness that will concretely constrain the photographic event. Campion overlooks this prior stage when he isolates the photographic event as "the defining trait of photography" (2024, 50). Simplification leaves Campion's position too close to a single-stage account and deprives him of a line of analysis that he could use to justify the distinction between real and simulated photography.

The multi-stage account says that a photographic event is necessary to produce a photographic register and that it is necessary to render the register before a photographic image can exist. Campion entertains the idea that videogame 'photography' might parallel the multi-stage account in all key respects, to the extent that only the action of light in the photographic event sets them apart. He reports that, "on the basis that the screenshot command records information to be processed as a visual image, it could be argued that the issuing of a screenshot command bears a similarity to the photographic event" (2024, 59). He does not endorse this argument because he is convinced that the action of light in the photographic event is a decisive difference. But in so doing he makes the difference too slight. If, instead, the photographic event is construed as complex and concrete, it has no plausible resemblance to

videogame screenshotting.

If videogame 'photography' is measured against the multi-stage account, we should ask what performs the role of the light array? Could the illuminated videogame screen be equivalent to an optical light image? Perhaps light is channelled from the world of the game onto the screen, not conceived of as an Albertian window but, rather, the wall of a camera obscura, or the ground glass of a large format camera. Perhaps screenshotting 'captures' a 2D image that is projected onto the screen, reflecting visual properties of a virtual '3D' world. But what would be the equivalent of the photosensitive surface or sensor, that registers light from the light array? The viewing screen cannot perform this role. Smartphone screens and electronic viewfinders display images of an external scene that guide a photographer in photographing the scene. But a photographic event is not registration of a display screen; it is registration of the light array on a sensor located inside the camera. Screenshotting, as Campion describes, saves graphical information which can be rendered to produce an image of the scene. But this simply means computer data is recorded; there is no array and no sensor. All the complex, concrete circumstances of a photographic event are missing, not only the light.

I defend the multi-stage account by fully emphasising all its stages, rendering as well as registration, and by attending to material constraints such as the light array, photosensitive surface, and time interval. The intermediary role of an optical light image and the materiality of a sensor reveal that a photographic image is highly mediated. Under full analysis, the problem with videogame photography is not just that it lacks a real photographic event, but that it lacks other necessary stages as well. By construing the photographic event too abstractly, Campion allows that virtual photography, with simulated light, can seem relevantly similar to physical photography, with real light, which creates pressure to collapse the distinction between the two. But when the

multi-stage account is construed concretely the distinction does not risk collapse. If the distinction withstands pressure, the category of what counts as photography will not meaninglessly explode.

Now to the second, methodological, horn of the dilemma. Campion reports that some videogame artists testify that their work is photography, and it is exhibited on the walls of photography galleries. He canvasses these views as possible reasons to collapse the distinction between simulated and real photography. I suggest that videogame artists are likely to be working with a single-stage conception of photography, where a screenshot is considered a kind of 'image capture' that produces a virtual photograph of a virtual world. Videogame artists may describe capturing an image of a virtual scene just as a photographer describes capturing an image of a physical scene. But in neither case is an image truly 'captured'. Authoritative photographers, including Adams and Weston, erroneously assumed a single-stage view of photography. It would be unsurprising to find videogame image-makers doing the same if they look to traditional photography as a model for their art practice.

What if, instead, these artists were to consider a multi-stage conception of photography, where the photographic event is construed concretely not abstractly? They might agree that their production process lacks too many relevant features to count as photography. It would not be enough to substitute real light for simulated light and suppose that everything else stays the same, because the absence of a timed interaction between the material properties of a light array and some particular photosensitive surface would become unavoidably evident.

I argued that the testimony of photographers extends aesthetic interest to the photographic event, so appreciation is not limited to the photographic image and its relation to the photographed scene. Objects, light sources, apertures, lenses and the photosensitive surface can all be concrete factors in a photographic event without necessarily appearing

in the visible image. The camera might be hand-held or on a tripod; the shutter might be triggered manually or by a timer. Specifying the photographic event in its fullest sense includes specifying the scene, the camera apparatus and, in some cases, the photographer's own body. Taking interest in the photographic event rather than solely the photographic image makes these factors aesthetically relevant even when they do not appear in the image.

Artists who describe their work as 'videogame photography' offer knowledgeable testimony about their artistic intent and steps taken to realize it. This is relevant to critically appreciating their art and may include factors that do not appear in the image. But they cannot offer testimony that enables the viewer to take aesthetic interest in the occurrence of a photographic event and the role that such an event has played in the multi-stage production of the image. Their accounts may help us take interest in another kind of production process, but their work does not fall into the category of an item that has been rendered from a photographic register.

The task for philosophy is to make phenomena perspicuous and to dispel areas of stubborn perplexity, rather than dictate first order practice. But if a philosophical account is sufficiently compelling it should stimulate or challenge artistic reflection and activity. I would be curious to know how videogame art might develop if artists were to reject the single-stage account of photography and accept a multi-stage perspective. Renderings from a digital register are open-ended, but registration is concrete. Light is essential, as are the material and temporal constraints imposed by an optical array, sensor, and other determinants of a photographic event.

Adams's composer-performer analogy insists that the production of a fine art photograph cannot be reduced to a photographic event, nor can it be reduced to the visual image because the two are interdependent: the photographic event is how the visualisation of an expressive print

is registered in a 'score' and the expressive rendering of that score as an image is a performance of the visualisation. Adams invoked this analogy to establish the credentials of fine art photography. Photographers initially exhibited work on the walls of galleries dedicated to paintings, prints, and drawings. Adams deliberately avoided using the word 'photographs' in his first published work; instead, he used the term 'prints'. Eventually, when photography gained exhibition status in photography galleries it had no need to align itself with prints and painterly pictorialism. For Adams, the parallel with music helped him to reimagine the fine art status of photography independent from comparison with paintings. A century later, if digital artists who start with a blank canvas are like painters, then videogame artists are certainly more like photographers. They encounter a virtual world and use features of that world to produce their images. Their craft and creativity go beyond merely screenshotting a video game, and it is right for artists to describe their production methods in ways that show where credit is due. However, the comparison with photography is less plausible than Campion allows.

When Ansel Adams tells us that his prints are musical performances, his claim should be taken seriously because it provides insight into his art practice, but it does not justify redefining the ontological category of musical performances. The same applies when Justin Berry says that his landscape images of virtual worlds are photographs; his claim should be taken seriously to appreciate his new media art practice, but it is not a reason to redefine photography.

3 Guipponi on Renaissance Intarsia

Guipponi offers a surprising and fascinating extension of the music-photography analogy into a discussion of Renaissance intarsia, and I am convinced by her main argument. It fits particularly well with the spirit of Adam's analogy but also applies the methodological principles that I promote in my article: namely taking seriously the

testimony of practitioners. By arguing that these works are the product of interdependent acts of 'composition' and 'performance', rather than a single-authored sub-genre of paintings, she delivers the kind of outcome that I hope to achieve: a better understanding of creative achievements and assignment of credit to practitioners who are otherwise overlooked.

Guipponi seeks "to put aside the possibility that intarsia is a craft" (2024, 68), perhaps implicitly treating art and craft as exclusive categories. However, Aaron Ridley (1998, Ch.2) clarifies that Collingwood did not consider art and craft to be exclusive categories of object. When craft technique is entirely instrumental the result is mere craft, but craft technique can also be a feature of expressive art. It is possible to appreciate the craft aspect of an artwork as well as its art aspect, although what makes it art is always more than instrumental technique. Collingwood says little about photography in *The Principles of Art*, but his overall view, I believe, is compatible with much that Ansel Adams says about his 'expressive' or 'creative' fine art photography.

The relation between craft and art is an overarching theme for Adams. In one introduction he writes, "I shall attempt in these books to suggest the importance of craft and its relation to creativity in photography." (Adams 2003a, ix) and further underlines his point: "Do not lose sight of the essential importance of *craft*; every worthwhile human endeavour depends on the highest levels of concentration and mastery of basic tools." (Adams 2003a, xiii, original emphasis) These remarks would be trivial if Adams were merely claiming that craft technique is important for art. This might appear to be his claim when he states, for example, that, "As with other creative processes, understanding craft and controlling the materials are vital to the quality of the final result" (Adams 2003b, 9). But Adams does go further, because he claims that visualisation, the defining 'emotional-mental' condition of his fine art photography, can only be achieved when a threshold of excellence in

craft is attained. He says that 'True freedom in concept and visualisation demands a refined craft" (Adams 2002, xiii). Here, he is not simply saying that craft is the technical basis for any art; he is saying that an artist needs to become a master of the craft to be capable of artistic expression at all. In his *Autobiography* he presents this challenge using the music-photography analogy:

> Musicians practice constantly; most photographers do not practice enough. The siren call of the hobby obscures the necessary exactions of art. It is easy to take a photograph, but it is harder to make a masterpiece in photography than in any other art medium. (Adams 1985, 279)

It does not follow that excellence in a craft is by itself an artistic achievement, because the former is possible without the latter. Recall that Adams draws a categorical distinction between functional photography and fine art photography. Technical craft is the dominant feature of functional photography, whereas 'creative-intuitive forces' must dominate in fine art. Hence, for fine art, "Visualization is the underlying objective; the craft and technical aspects, while important in themselves, should always be subservient to the expressive concepts of the photographer – necessary but not dominant" (Adams 2002, ix). I venture that Collingwood would approve.

In my article, I claimed that the multi-stage account has a methodological benefit because it licenses taking seriously the knowledgeable testimony of photographers. The relation between craft and creativity is important in this regard, because a photographer describing visualisation will at the same time have to describe the technical craft involved in producing a photograph. Sceptics about fine art photography were wrong to suppose that knowledgeable testimony should be limited to craft and not extended to creativity. In his writing and photography, Adams provides good reasons to go beyond this assumption.

Guipponi could embrace the relation between craft and creativity that we find in Adams, and in Ridley's reading of Collingwood. By doing so, she no longer needs to develop "a full argument that intarsia is not a craft" (2024, 68) but can still argue that intarsia is an independent artform.

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PHOTOGRAPHY AND ARTISTIC LUCK

Daniel Star
Boston University

Contemporary philosophers of photography have focused on one topic more than any other: scepticism concerning the status of photography as an artform. The Scrutonian form of scepticism that these philosophers generally focus on may not be the form that most worried actual photographers and art critics in the past, or so one might be inclined to think after reading Robin Kelsey's Photography and the Art of Chance (2015), a recent work of art history. According to Kelsey, the historical source of doubt concerning the potential for photographs to count as art has more to do with the way photographs are or can be the products of luck than with the idea that photographs mechanically capture mind-independent properties in the world. Reconstructing the informal arguments that Kelsey suggests were historically of concern, I carefully distinguish between and formulate two luck-based sceptical arguments. I argue that both arguments fail, partly by drawing on the philosophical literature on luck. In the end, Scrutonian scepticism may be the philosophically more interesting form of scepticism regarding the artistic status of photography, even if Kelsey's reading of the history of photography is correct.

1 Introduction

In the Anglo-American philosophy of photography literature that burgeoned after the publication of Roger Scruton's "Photography and Representation" (1981), scepticism concerning the status of photography as an artform has been discussed more than any other topic. With few exceptions, this discussion has not involved embracing the idea that "pure" photography is *not* art. Instead, it has been powered by the thought that we might reasonably expect to learn a great deal about the nature of photography, as well as, perhaps, the nature of art, through attempting to figure out exactly where arguments of a Scrutonian kind go wrong.[1]

It may surprise people familiar with this literature that a serious work of historical scholarship suggests that the sceptical concern at the locus of so many discussions in the philosophical literature has not actually been the sceptical concern that most worried actual photographers and critics in the past. An important recent work of art history, Robin Kelsey's *Photography and the Art of Chance* (2015) suggests philosophers have overlooked an historically more influential sceptical concern. On Kelsey's reading of the history of photography, the main source of doubt about its suitability to be art is the thought that even the most aesthetically appealing photographs may be the product of luck. Thus, photographers may deserve little or no aesthetic credit for their work.

1 The sceptical conclusion is endorsed by Scruton, and Robert Hopkins (2015) is a rare example of the conclusion being endorsed by another philosopher. Hopkins's sceptical argument differs from Scruton's, but it is of the same general kind, focusing on the relation between mind-independent properties and their counterparts in the content of photographs. In any case, several papers have demonstrated where Scruton goes wrong (see Phillips 2009 and Lopes 2003 especially, but also the overviews of the relevant literature in Lopes 2016 and Costello 2017). The idea that we can learn a good deal about the art(s) of photography by studying a sceptical argument of the general kind discussed by Scruton is an explicit theme of Lopes' *Four Arts of Photography* (2016). Lopes distances himself from Scruton by indicating he is not interested in faithfully reconstructing Scruton's argument (2016, fn. 63), but as Diarmuid Costello notes in a response published in the book, "The kind of skepticism that Lopes focuses on is clearly of Scrutonian descent" (2016, 136).

Kelsey himself does not discuss either the contemporary philosophy of photography literature or the philosophical work on luck that I'll draw on here (although he does discuss, a little, the history of ideas with respect to probability). He uses the concepts of luck and chance to refer to several different phenomena, generally without registering that he is bunching together different things (e.g., the chancy chemical processes that early photographers depended on when taking and developing photographs, unforeseen changes in scenes photographed just before or during the period in which they are being taken, and indeterministic chaos in the world). Nor does Kelsey formulate a precise sceptical argument. His interests, quite reasonably, lie elsewhere. He focuses on the history of practical attempts to grapple with the anxieties concerning photography's aesthetic status engendered by thoughts about chance. The first aim of the present paper is to reconstruct two precise sceptical arguments from Kelsey's account of the history of photography.

I am not claiming that Kelsey himself would ultimately wish to defend either of these arguments or any similar sceptical argument about the artistic status of photography. I take it that he is not a sceptic about the artistic merits of a great many photographs. He does sometimes write *as if* certain sceptical considerations are compelling, but I take it he mainly does this to help the reader appreciate why some artists and art critics might have found such scepticism either compelling or threatening. He at times encourages us to sympathetically (if temporarily) adopt a sceptical perspective so that we might better understand those who took such a perspective in the past. That said, I suggest below that there is one place where he appears to take on the sceptical perspective himself in a way that is problematic, and this is when it comes to his interpretation of Henri Cartier-Bresson and photographers that have followed him in chasing "the decisive moment." One genre of photography associated both with this phrase and many of Cartier-Bresson's best photographs is *street photography*. This genre is more relevant for reflecting on artistic luck than one might think from reading Kelsey's book. For this reason,

I include a few examples of street photography (Figures 1 to 3). These photographs were not staged in advance, and the reader might like to think about the role of luck in their production before proceeding to the next section.

Figure 1. "What Was I Doing?", New York, 2022 (photo by the author).

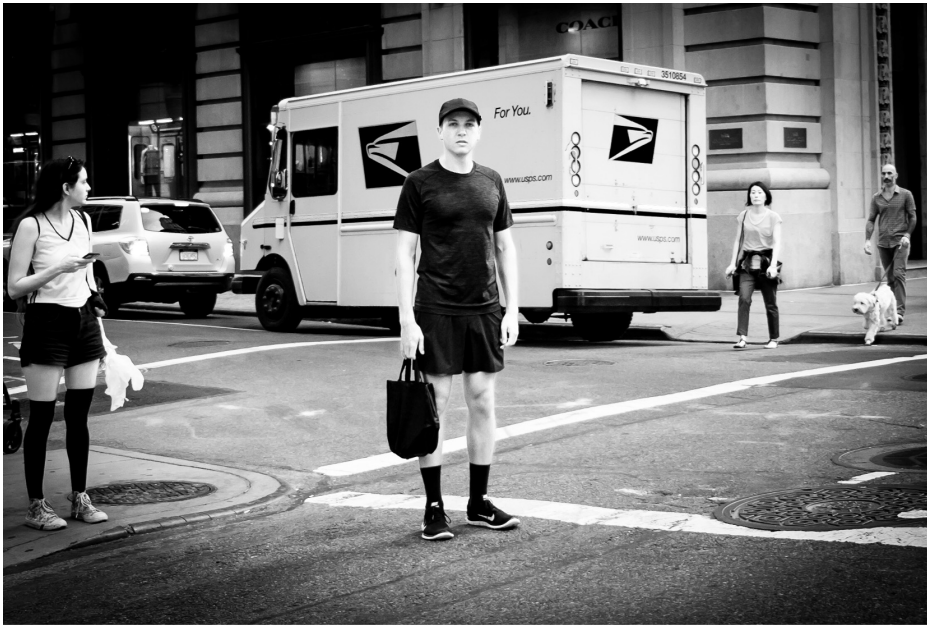

Figure 2. "For You", New York, 2016 (photo by the author).

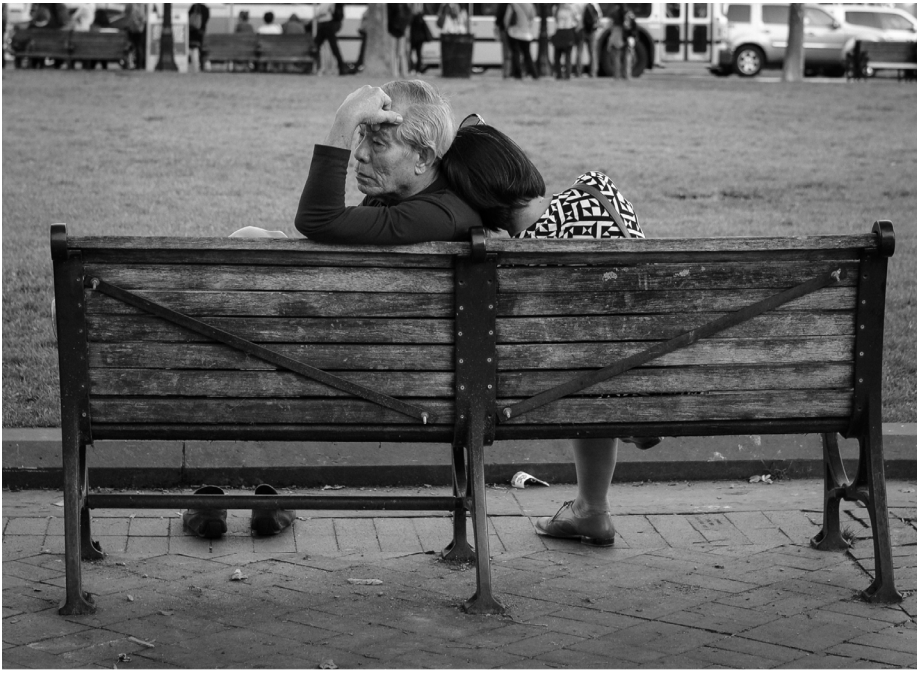

Figure 3. "Thinking and Resting", Boston, 2018 (photo by the author)

The second aim of this paper is to defuse luck-based sceptical arguments concerning photography, partly by drawing on work on luck in contemporary ethics.[2] In this second aim, the philosopher might be said to be arriving late on the scene. That photographers have, over time, been largely successful in overcoming scepticism through their artistic endeavours is evident given the high regard in which photography is now held by art critics and institutions. Nonetheless, we might hope to better understand both photography and art by thinking about where

2 Very little has been written by contemporary philosophers on the role of luck in aesthetics. Ribeiro (2018, 100) focuses on the role of luck with respect to the *appreciation* of art. She distinguishes such "aesthetic luck" from "artistic luck," which involves artists being lucky or unlucky with respect to the creative process (beyond pointing this out, she does not discuss artistic luck). This is a useful distinction to bear in mind, and I've followed her suggestion regarding terminology. See also Brand (2015).

these sceptical arguments regarding the artistic status of photography go wrong.

2 Mind Independence Based Skepticism and Luck Based Skepticism

This is not the place to discuss the kind of skepticism that has exercised the minds of philosophers of photography following Scruton (1981). Its historical predecessors include one of the inventors of photography, William Henry Fox Talbot (1844), who tellingly titled his book about photography *The Pencil of Nature*. Since I do not have the space to discuss either Scruton's famous paper or its historical predecessors, let me simply provide an interpretation of Scruton's skeptical argument that will be helpful in the present context. There is no need for us to determine the best version of that argument here (perhaps it is the argument set out in Lopes 2016, 17, 133-34). The reason I articulate premisses 4 through 6 in the precise way that I do here—referring to *artistic creditworthiness*—is to point to one place where this and the otherwise very different subsequent arguments might be similar.[3] Here it is:

1. Photographs only contain imprints of features of the world that are independent of the mind of the photographer.

3 It is very much beyond the scope of this paper to defend a particular account of artistic creditworthiness. Suffice to say that I take it that three necessary conditions for artistic creditworthiness are: (1) responsibility for the relevant artistic acts (this may require attributability, but not accountability [see Watson 1996]), (2) the employment of artistically relevant skills, and (3) that the resultant artwork is aesthetically valuable in ways at least somewhat related to the artistic skills of the artist. If the reader happens to be unsympathetic to any general approach to art that would make use of the concept of artistic creditworthiness, he or she should feel free to view it as simply a tool for analyzing the sceptical arguments I am interested in here (and for understanding Kelsey's book, as this concept provides us with a productive way of interpreting his take on the history of photography). That being said, I do think the concept is helpful when it comes to understanding and appreciating art in general. Some recent work in aesthetics backs up my thought that skilful activities or achievements are an especially significant dimension of artistic value: see, for instance, Carroll (2016), Lopes (2018, Ch. 5), and Cavedon-Taylor (2021). A particularly relevant earlier work is Davies (2004).

2. If something only contains imprints of features of the world that are independent of the mind of the photographer, then it does not depictively express thoughts.

3. Photographs do not depictively express thoughts (from 1 and 2).

4. If something does not depictively express thoughts it is not artistically creditworthy.

5. Photographs are not artistically creditworthy (from 3 and 4).

6. Art is always artistically creditworthy.[4]

7. Photographs are not art (from 5 and 6).

Introducing the different kind of skepticism that is the subject of his book, Kelsey writes:

> Can photographs be art? Photography is prone to chance. … Pressing the button fosters a sense of having produced the picture, but how far does that responsibility extend? Has the person who has accidentally taken a superb photograph made a work of

4 When I describe photographs or art as artistically creditworthy, I am, in effect, employing a shorthand description since it is the relevant human agents that we take to be responsible for doing something creditworthy, rather than the objects themselves (similarly, in the literature on moral praiseworthiness, acts are sometimes described as praiseworthy, but this is generally taken to be shorthand for saying that the relevant agents are morally praiseworthy for doing the relevant acts). 'Art is always artistically creditworthy' is shorthand for 'Every artwork is such that there is an agent, or agents, that are artistically creditworthy for having created that artwork.'

> art? The conspicuous role of chance in photography sets it apart from arts such as painting or literature. (Kelsey 2015, 1-2)

Two concerns expressed here are that (1) excellent photographs, unlike excellent paintings or works of literature, can be produced *accidentally* (perhaps by rank amateurs), rather than *skillfully*; and (2) this is due to the ubiquitous role of chance or luck in photography.

Kelsey goes on to argue that for early photographers and critics, the ubiquitous role of chance in photography was the source of serious doubt as to its suitability as an art form. Chance appears to undermine any claim that the photographer is *responsible* for the attractive features of photographs; that is, that he or she deserves credit for the photograph having such features. In other words, at least some of the time, Kelsey's primary concern appears to be metaphysical, rather than epistemic. He sometimes appears to think that the principal question is not whether it is difficult or impossible to determine *when* photographs are works of art, but rather, simply, whether photographs are ever works of art. He makes it very clear that he has artistic *credit* in mind when it comes to the scepticism he is interested in: "For photography as art, credit … has been the tricky issue. Chance has threatened to fill the disconcerting gap in the medium between intention and result" (2015, 9). I take the argument that best sums up this type of scepticism to be the one that follows.

1. The content of a photograph is the product of luck.

2. An object whose content is the product of luck cannot be artistically creditworthy.

3. Photographs are not artistically creditworthy (from 1 and 2).

4. Art is always artistically creditworthy.

5. Photographs are not art (from 3 and 4).

Before I diagnose this argument, let me briefly say something more about how it relates to Kelsey's book. It might be thought that this argument cannot be one that either Kelsey or the historical figures he discusses would take seriously, perhaps because they reject the first premiss of the argument from the get-go.[5] The first important thing to say in response to this concern is that there are many places in the text where it is clear Kelsey is interested in a metaphysical issue, rather than a merely epistemological one (despite the fact that the epistemological argument I discuss in section 3 might be thought to be a better argument). He writes, for instance, "Can photographs *be* art? … Chance has threatened to fill the disconcerting gap in the medium between intention and result." (1, 9, emphasis added). Second, as I say in the next section, there is at least one important *type* of luck that makes the first premiss quite attractive, if not always true. Third, Kelsey constantly moves back and forth between examples of different types of luck in his book, without registering that he may not be talking about the same kind of thing as he does so (which is not uncommon outside of careful philosophical discussions of luck, to be fair). This can easily lead to the kind of equivocation that can make unsound arguments appear sound, as I make clear below. Sadly, history is littered with unsound arguments that were not thought to be unsound (or not fully teased apart thoughts that correspond to such arguments), and which moved highly intelligent people to make unwarranted assertions. Fourth, Kelsey's discussion of Cartier-Bresson, to some extent, relies on taking this form of scepticism seriously, as I discuss briefly below. Finally, one could weaken the argument above by specifying throughout that one

5 A concern pressed on me by an anonymous referee.

is simply talking about a very large set of photographs, a set which may include most photographs ever taken. Doing so would very much push us in the direction of the alternative argument I consider in section 3. Then, one would be most interested in the issue of *how* to pick out the photographs that deserve praise from those that do not. Perhaps separating the wheat from the chaff is, in fact, the dominant concern of the photographers that Kelsey is interested in. Even if this is the case, it is instructive to first see where the metaphysical argument, expressed in very general terms, goes wrong.

3 Where Luck-Based Skepticism Goes Wrong

Thomas Nagel (1979) famously pointed out that there are different kinds of luck. Two, in particular, interest us here.[6] *Circumstantial luck* is luck with respect to "antecedent circumstances" (antecedent to particular actions), whereas *resultant luck* is luck "in the way one's actions and projects turn out" (Nagel 1979, 28). An assassin may get lucky by accidentally running into a victim at an opportune moment, or may instead get lucky by managing to kill at a distance sufficient to make it unlikely that he would succeed. It should also be said that when we speak of good or bad luck, we're not *merely* speaking of an event that had a low probability of occurring and whose occurrence was outside of an agent's control. We also take it that the event was of some significance to the agent in question (Pritchard 2005, 132-33).

Very often, agential control can diminish the relevance of resultant luck

6 A third kind of luck that Nagel discusses, constitutive luck, might be thought to pose the greatest threat to attributions of creditworthiness in general. A talented artist could have been an untalented artist, and we might think they deserve no credit for being talented (even if their talent is produced by them being hard-working, they could have been born lazy). But we need not here consider scepticism about responsibility and creditworthiness in general, since if there is no (artistic) creditworthiness *in general* then sceptical arguments concerning artistic creditworthiness and the art of photography, in particular, are completely redundant. For the present project to make sense, the truth of any one of several reasonable positive views about free will and responsibility defended by contemporary philosophers (compatibilist, semi-compatibilist, libertarian, etc.) will suffice.

through the employment of skills, without ever completely ruling out a need for the world to cooperate. Consider the following example. Soccer is a game where chance is generally thought to play an enormous role in determining the outcome of games. A professional soccer player might score a goal in a way where her skills play no role (e.g., the ball bounces off her head because she looked up to attend to a fan), or she might instead score a goal in a way where her skills play a crucial role. In the second case, we will admire her, no matter how *circumstantially* lucky she is to have been where the ball was at the time she scored a goal. In fact, we might admire her even more when we judge that she is circumstantially lucky. The fact that the ball suddenly ended up somewhere on the field where she did not expect it to be may mean her successful response to her circumstances was even more agile than it might otherwise have been (even if she had still scored a goal). The relevant *resultant* luck, good or bad, from the moment the professional begins her attempt to score a goal to the moment she either succeeds or fails in her endeavour, is *skill-independent* (my term). The extent to which it is because of her skills that she scores a goal (or gets close to doing so) is precisely the extent to which the outcome of her act is *skill-dependent,* rather than the product of resultant luck. If she kicks the ball skilfully from a distance, between other players, etc., and the only thing that prevents her from actually succeeding is a sudden gust of wind, then she is very unlucky, and her skilful *attempt* at scoring a goal, at least, is creditworthy (although spectators may fail to recognize this).

Now that we have the distinction between circumstantial and resultant luck before us, we can see where the above argument goes wrong.[7] It is important for a defender of the argument to avoid equivocation on 'luck' across premiss 1 and premiss 2, since equivocation will render the argument invalid. Take circumstantial luck first. Suppose we

7 See Cavedon-Taylor 2021 for a discussion of a different but also relevant distinction between structuring causes (e.g., the scene in front of a camera) and triggering causes (e.g., an agent's decision to take a photograph at a particular moment).

assume that photographs are always the result of a considerable degree of circumstantial luck (this may at least be true of some types of photography that we take to be art, so let's just grant it for the sake of argument; see my comments about street photography below). Then we are assuming the first premiss is true. But now it's obvious that the second premiss is false since objects whose content is the product of circumstantial luck can be artistically creditworthy, just as the soccer player who kicks a goal only because she was lucky to be standing in the right place on the field is still creditworthy (for a different example, consider an artist who paints a masterpiece she would otherwise not have painted if she had not, luckily, been given the right kinds of paint at the right time).

If, on the other hand, we take the luck in 1 and 2 to be resultant luck, and we take the claim in 1 to be that the content of a photograph is always *completely* the product of resultant luck, then 1 is not true. We have seen outcomes are very often a product of resultant luck *and* skill, and we have no reason to deny that photographers possess skills that prevent photographs from being even largely, let alone completely, the product of resultant luck (much of the time). If, instead, we take premiss 1 to say that photographs are always at least *partly* the product of resultant luck, then premiss 2 won't be true since creditworthy success in skillful actions cannot and does not consist in them being altogether resistant to resultant luck. All human acts that extend into the world (so are not merely internal mental acts) require the cooperation of the world to some extent to succeed, but this cooperation can be highly, if not perfectly predictable (at least to suitably situated agents, where being well-situated often depends on having relevant skills or discriminatory abilities).

At this point, the reader might worry about cases where photographers *do* get very lucky when it comes to capturing a worthy scene that they do not see coming at the very moment they take a photograph.

Although I am claiming this should be considered the exception rather than the rule, I do not mean to deny that it ever happens. If we interpret premiss 2 so that it is about cases that involve only skill-independent resultant luck (so no skills are involved) and restrict the subject matter to photographic imprints at the exact time the photograph is taken, it still turns out that premiss 2 is not true. This is because artistic credit can be earned by a photographer through skillfully selecting images from a series of negatives or digital image files (that is, deciding that a particular image will be a publicly displayed photograph) and skillfully curating a series of photographs. There is, in addition, artistic credit to be earned in "post-processing" negatives or image files through burning and dodging, choosing particular colour or black and white tonal profiles, etc., but here the photographer is altering the content of the final photograph. That is to say, post-processing provides counterexamples to premiss 1 rather than premiss 2.

Let us now consider a particularly relevant section of Kelsey's book. Surprisingly, for a book on the role of chance in photography, Kelsey spends very little time discussing street photography. One might have thought this genre would deserve much discussion in a book on photography and chance, since it is a genre where certain photographic artists excel at highlighting incredible coincidences and rarely-seen juxtaposi-

tions.[8] Good street photographers often search out the accidental in an extremely skilful fashion. But one would not glean this from reading Kelsey's critical discussion of photographs of this kind, which centres on Henri Cartier-Bresson (200-210). Kelsey here targets a view that he ascribes to Cartier-Bresson on the basis of some of his writings concerning the "decisive moment" (although the discussion also mentions Jung and others). This is the view that street photographs that meet Cartier-Bresson's ideal somehow capture a feature of an underlying cosmic significance to events that we don't ordinarily see, and that the skilful street photographer thereby succeeds in combating the randomness of events in the world by revealing an underlying order of things.

This last idea is somewhat obscure, and to the extent I understand it, I think it is simply false. Kelsey thinks the idea of street photographers being able to reveal a hidden cosmic order through taking photographs at the right moment is not worth taking seriously, and I agree with him. Furthermore, to the extent his interpretation of Cartier-Bresson's writings is correct and fair, we should not look to those writings to understand street photography. These writings are very much distinct, after all, from Cartier-Bresson's often excellent photographs. People

8 In the discussion above of where the first luck-based argument goes wrong, I focused on cases where people might be circumstantially very lucky. I don't mean to leave the reader with the false impression that I think all (artistically noteworthy) street photography is spontaneous in a way that is analogous to the soccer player just happening to be in the right part of the field when the ball ends up there. Some excellent photographs (or goals kicked) are produced this way, and some are not. Street photographers will not normally manipulate subjects or stage scenes (that one must not do such things is considered a constitutive norm of the genre), but they will often spend a considerable amount of time in a carefully chosen location waiting for the right combination of elements to occur. There can be considerable skill involved in the street photographer choosing some features of her circumstances carefully while allowing others to remain open to chance (while, of course, in other genres, especially those involving the use of a studio, more is done to diminish the role that circumstantial luck plays before photographs are taken). For a history of this genre that discusses how art historians have sometimes in the past looked down their noses at or downplayed the artistic importance of street photography, which also contains reprints of many fine examples of the genre, see Westerbeck and Meyerowitz (2017).

often have skills that they misdescribe. All this being said, the fact that there is no artistic photographic skill that involves capturing a hidden cosmic order does not mean there is no artistic skill at all involved in encountering and making something good of circumstantial luck in the way street photographers do continually. Yet Kelsey seems to think it is precisely any skill in encountering (circumstantial) luck that we should reject on the basis of considering Cartier-Bresson's flawed conception of the decisive moment:

> The issue… does not turn on a distinction between those subject to chance and those who have mastered it… Any such distinction would be predicated on a firm bond between person and photograph that chance will not allow (2015, 209-10).

Here, we see Kelsey appearing to assert that the nature of chanciness simply will not allow some to be more skilled at taking advantage of luck in their photographs than others. On the contrary, chance does often allow there to be a firm bond between a skilled individual and the products of their endeavors, and this bond is absent in the case of the amateur. This is as much true of the art of photography in a genre where luck of a certain kind (circumstantial luck) is constantly being made evident, as it is in a sporting game, soccer, where such luck is constantly being made evident. In order to appreciate this, it is crucial to understand both that resultant luck is a very different thing than circumstantial luck (it's particularly important to notice that one can have a lot of the second without much of the first, but the reverse is also true), and that some limited degree of resultant luck is still compatible with photographic activities being skilful and artistically creditworthy.

4 An Alternative Luck-Based Argument and Where It Goes Wrong

Kelsey's view regarding Cartier-Bresson (and, by inference, much other photography) illustrates that at least some of the time, Kelsey is con-

cerned to think about luck in metaphysical terms. This may explain why he thinks Cartier-Bresson's impressive work is not a good place to look for a response to scepticism about the actual artistic status of photographs. In any case, my discussion of that argument above demonstrates that it is flawed. We can reconstruct another, quite different, sceptical argument based on other things Kelsey says about certain moments in the history of photography. This alternative argument focuses on luck and *knowledge*, and it's possible that it better reflects the history of photography's reception in the art world. Kelsey himself doesn't carefully distinguish between the epistemic issue highlighted by this argument and the metaphysical issue we examined earlier. It is perhaps not entirely clear which form of scepticism we might interpret him as targeting when he writes:

> Even if we accept the possibility of a photographer embodying Cartier-Bresson's ideal of feline reflexes… we will still lack criteria for distinguishing photographs produced by an enlightened union with the moment from those produced by dumb luck. (Kelsey 2015, 205)

I think Kelsey is probably best understood to be making a claim about *epistemic* criteria at this point. Here is the epistemic luck-based argument as I would reconstruct it:

1. It is very difficult to *know* whether or not the content of any particular photograph is the product of skill-independent luck.

2. If it is very difficult to know whether or not the content of any particular photograph is the product of skill-independent luck, then it is very difficult to know whether or not that photograph is artistically creditworthy.

3. It is very difficult to know whether or not the content of any particular photograph is artistically creditworthy (from 1 and 2).

4. Art is always artistically creditworthy.

5. It is very difficult to know whether or not any particular photograph is art (from 3 and 4).

The conclusion of this argument, while weaker than the conclusion of the previous argument, is certainly strong enough for it to have the potential to produce anxiety in photographers, art critics, and institutions when it comes to the question of whether photographs should be treated as art in practice. The first premiss is consistent with many photographs actually being works of art—that is, with a rejection of the first luck-based argument. Putting that argument to one side, then, why might one be tempted to think the first premiss of this alternative argument is true?

It's an important idea for Kelsey that chanciness makes it hard to determine when photographers deserve credit for their work: "Photography is prone to chance. Every taker of snapshots knows that. … *Once in a blue moon, a rank amateur produces an exquisite picture.*" (2015, 1-2, emphasis added). Let's assume this last statement is true. If this possibility looms large in our mind, and we know nothing about how a particular photograph was produced, it can seem that, even if we grant that some photographs are art, we may never know whether any particular photograph is merely the product of skill-independent luck or, instead, the product of artistic skills. Add to this one more consideration. Photographs are *of* things in the world. This may remind us of the mind independence argument, and the concern that photographs simply reproduce what is seen by the photographer. To the extent one finds that argument attrac-

tive (I don't), one is likely to downplay or overlook the considerable skill that is generally required to take good photos. Thus, one is more likely than one otherwise would be to think that there will be many cases where one will not be able to tell whether an attractive photograph was taken skillfully or by accident.

In a quotation I provided earlier, Kelsey asks, "Has the person who has accidentally taken a superb photograph [thereby] made a work of art?" Perhaps the right response to this question is "no." In the previous section, I granted that there might be odd occasions where even a skilful photographer takes a photograph such that its positive qualities are not due to the use of their skills. This might mean we sometimes misidentify photographs as works of art when we would be less likely to do so with paintings or other kinds of artwork. In giving voice to sceptical concerns, it is clear that Kelsey is generally thinking of *single* photographs. He says "inference of mastery *from any particular photograph*, due to the role of change in the medium, is unwarranted" (2, emphasis added).

Crucially, however, this doesn't mean the first premiss of our second luck-based argument is true. Expert appreciators and critics are expected to know a lot about the *oeuvre* of an artistic photographer and not simply examine one photograph in isolation. Even if art appreciators, more generally, are not familiar with the *oeuvre* of an artistic photographer, they still often encounter the photographer's work as part of a carefully arranged and printed series of photographs in either an exhibition or a photobook. Thanks especially to the efforts of art historians and museum curators in recent decades, now more attention is paid to the important artistic unit of the photobook (see Parr and Badger 2007 for an influential and much-discussed book on this topic). This is partly because, throughout the history of photography, photographic artists have often been particularly keen to create carefully edited photobooks.

The fact that a good artistic photographer can be counted on to *relia-*

bly produce good artistic photographs indicates why premiss 1 is, as a general claim, well and truly false. The mistake is to think that the only way we could demonstrate that premiss 1 is false is by looking at the evidence particular to a single photo. But why should we not be able to infer that a particular photograph is a creditworthy work of art from facts external to the content of that particular photo? There is no good reason to think that induction from other cases (other photographs by the same artist) cannot be the basis of our knowledge that a particular photograph is, in large part, the product of artistic skill. Induction can be an epistemically justifiable, generally reliable process for forming beliefs in many domains. It is widely accepted in epistemology that processes for forming beliefs do not need to deliver infallibility within a domain to count as reliable enough to undergird knowledge within that domain (when other conditions are also met).

Interestingly, this explanation for why premiss 1 is false leaves open the possibility that it was very difficult (or perhaps even impossible) for *early* photographers and critics to come to know whether or not particular photographs were the product of artistically creditworthy skills. We might think we are sometimes in a parallel epistemic situation when we consider students of photography who are still in the process of developing skills. Returning to experienced photographers, one might add to the point just made about induction that there is also no good reason, in general, to think that we cannot come to know that an artist relied on their skills on a particular occasion, rather than merely got lucky, simply through considering and trusting the testimony of that artist (although there can, of course, be reasons to doubt testimony on particular occasions).

Our discussion of this argument enabled us to say something informative about how scepticism, powered by considerations to do with luck, might be related to the type of scepticism that has, to date, most interested contemporary philosophers of photography. When we con-

sider the rank amateur, as Kelsey insists we should, we are likely to find ourselves focusing on the automaticity of a significant part of the photographic process. This suggests that it may be the ingredients of the mind independence argument that are really the source of our doubts on these occasions. This provides a diagnosis of why Kelsey himself discusses, in passing, historical predecessors of Scrutonian scepticism (although not under this description; see, especially, Chs. 1 and 2). He does this because he thinks they bolster the luck-based scepticism that he argues is *the* kind of scepticism that produced anxiety in early photographers and critics. He may or may not be right about the historical dominance of luck-based scepticism. In any case, he fails to register that he is in the vicinity of a logically independent sceptical argument when mentioning concerns about the mechanical nature of photography. At this point, we may suspect that the philosophers that I began by admonishing for overlooking the scepticism that has been the subject of this paper have, in the end, been focusing on a more fundamental, or at least more interesting form of skepticism. Perhaps they just got lucky!

Rather than end on that jokey note, let me conclude by returning to the thought mentioned at the beginning. Considering sceptical arguments can be instructive, even when one thinks they are unsound. It can be interesting to think about where these arguments go wrong. How has considering our two luck-based arguments helped us better understand or appreciate certain aspects of photography? In the case of the first argument, we learnt that it is very important to distinguish between two types of luck, each of which plays a significant role in photography (in varying ways, depending on genre), and that by distinguishing carefully between the two we can see how paying attention to the kind of factors that give rise to each of them can be important to photographic artists in quite different ways. In the case of the second argument, we learnt that it is important to distinguish between artistic credit in relation to single photographs and artistic credit in relation to an *oeuvre,* or to smaller artistically significant collections of photographs. The grain of

truth in the second luck-based sceptical argument is that when we do *only* focus on individual photographs, and lack evidence regarding how exactly a photograph was taken, it may be very difficult or impossible to know whether the photographer is creditworthy or not. Luckily, we are often not in that situation at all.[9]

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REALISM, OBJECTIVITY, AND THE NATURE OF EPISTEMIC MERIT IN PHOTOGRAPHY

Kim Schreier

Like the real world, works of art are open to multiple viewpoints and interpretations. Rich and complex, and at the same time available to the senses, photographic images are a distinct form of visual art. Any philosophical theory about the nature of the photographic process should be able to explain both its artistic value and epistemic merits. The current debate concerns delineating photography's potential to record events as an unbiased witness and use the automation of the image-making process to justify its epistemic virtue without losing its artistic potential. In general, its reliability as a source of knowledge has been explained by the mind-independent part of the process, when information from the light image is recorded. Since there are many ways to influence how the final photograph will look, we tend to rely more on the norms of social practices to govern the photographic process as well as expert opinions to rate them and justify their use. Whether an image will be valued for its epistemic or artistic properties, or both, ultimately depends on how the recorded information is interpreted, which itself depends on its further use.

Imagine an abandoned East London apartment, with windows covered in sheets of cardboard, and a lens strategically placed in a small cutout. The light funnelled through this hole projects a light image of what is in front of the lens onto the back wall, transforming the darkened room into a giant camera obscura. In collaboration with a group of young adults, artist Brendan Barry used four different flats to make large paper negatives of the view. The negatives were placed onto photographic paper and exposed to light to make contact prints. Concept Lund Point[1], as the project is called, created photographic images documenting London at a certain time and place. They are considered works of art. These images effortlessly reconcile photography's epistemic power with its expressive potential—a feat that philosophers of art struggle to find a consensus on. To be more specific, we can't seem to agree on what is sufficient for a photograph to come into being (Costello 2019, 315). So, should we stop looking for a highly generic essence of photography?

Imagine the participants had traced the light image projected onto the wall with a pencil to render it permanent instead of letting light mark a photo-sensitive surface, and that they applied chemicals to make a negative and contact printed it to produce a photographic image. No doubt, the image would have been accepted as a work of art. It would not, however, have been so readily accepted as a document that warrants true beliefs about East London's skyline. Drawings do not have the same effect on our belief system. Something about the immediacy of light marking a photosensitive surface makes us trust these images more. The question arises whether the epistemic privilege we grant them is always deserved or justified.

In general, we justify the trust we place in photographic images by referring to the reliability of the photographic mechanism: objectivity is guaranteed by the electrochemical process set in motion when a photosensitive surface is exposed to light. The mechanical nature of the

1 https://brendanbarry.co.uk/projects/lund-point

applied technology explains its epistemic privilege. The precursor to our modern camera, the camera obscura, has been used in most cultures to produce upside-down images of the world. Once portable versions with a mirror were produced, the optical device became very popular among artists. They used it to trace and draw lifelike depictions of a scene. When it was finally possible to fixate the ephemeral light image on a photosensitive surface, the depictions thus produced were admired for their tremendous precision in showing even the smallest of details and praised for their realism. Realistic, as an adjective, states something about the accuracy of a depiction. A realistic or faithful image is not necessarily an objective or impartial one. Objectivity implies that the emotions, beliefs, or values of a person do not influence the method or medium used to produce the picture.

Soon after its invention, photography as a recording medium became all but synonymous with the word 'objectivity' for the population at large. Photographic images were praised as 'nature imprinting itself through the agency of light'. Many early commentators on photography used a vocabulary of evidence to point out the photograph's capacity to prove facts and its trustworthiness as a witness (Mnookin 1998, 18). According to Lorrain Daston and Peter Galison (2007), this concurs with a paradigm shift in the sciences during the mid-nineteenth century when epistemic virtue changed from truth-to-nature to mechanical objectivity. Objectivity became a code of values aimed to quiet the observer so nature could be heard:

> By mechanical objectivity we mean the insistent drive to repress the wilful intervention of the artist-author, and to put in its stead a set of procedures that would, as it were, move nature to the page through a strict protocol, if not automatically. (Daston and Galison 2007, 121)

Scientific illustrations representing the essence of a rose with its thorns,

roots, blossom, and flower were superseded by photographic reproductions of a typical instance of a rose, uncontaminated by human interpretation. The mechanical objectivity of the equipment explained photography's epistemic privilege: a causal recording medium that relies on belief-independent feature tracking to create automated and reproducible images that can warrant beliefs about the world, or an unmediated transcription of reality to prove matter of facts. The myth of perfection in a picture was created.

Within the art world, such claims were challenged right from the start. Photographers and art historians alike objected to the idea that photography was an automated photochemical process producing machine-made truths. They emphasized how technical decisions like choosing the focal length of a lens affected the image; and how the positioning of the subject, the angle, the preparation of the plate, the complexity of proper lighting, and the skills involved in darkroom manipulation influenced the outcome. In his famous essay *Seeing Photographically*, Edward Weston likened the idea that a photograph was purely the product of a machine and therefore not art, to convincing musicians that the sounds they produced through their machines could not be art because of the mechanical nature of their instruments (Weston 1980, 171). On the scientific side, photography's epistemic merit was often seen as debatable. Daston and Galison emphasized how the scientific community favoured photography because of its capacity to freeze detail with negligible labour or talent, which was very different from how scientific illustrators worked. Photographers and scientists, as well as their audiences, were perfectly aware that photographs could be faked, retouched, or otherwise manipulated (Daston and Galison 2007, 133).

Although the public believed photographic depictions to be objective truth-telling images, scientists and artists considered them a representation, not a replication. As such, they could be manipulable, partial, and

potentially misleading. The law agreed with them, as legal scholar Jennifer Mnookin explains in her paper about the status of photographic evidence in our court system (Mnookin 1998, 23). She cites 'Judicial Photography' from 1872:

> [I]t is no exaggeration to say that an artist and practised manipulator combined can do with the pencil of light pretty much the same as a painter who works with his brush and badger softener ... a photograph is not necessarily a faithful portrait.

In *Cowley vs. the People of the state of New York*, a judge admitted photographic evidence as, to his knowledge, it did not differ in kind of proof from the pictures of a painter. Even though he defines them as the products of natural laws and scientific process, "it is the skill of the operator that takes care of this [fair resemblance of the object], as it is the skill of the artist that makes a correct drawing of features" (Cowley 1881). He added that a spoken or written testimony about someone's appearance was just as acceptable as a portrait or a picture of that person, as the portrait and the photograph may err, and so may the witness. That is an infirmity to which all human testimony is lamentably liable. He also stated that when care is taken first to verify that the process by which the photograph was taken was conducted with skill and under favourable circumstances, the produced image may, in many of the issues for a jury, be an aid to determination. If taken by a skilled, trustworthy person under the right conditions, they were a form of illustrative testimony that could aid the witness in communicating his point. By the mid-1880s, the doctrine governing photographic evidence had stabilized, and it was aligned with other constructed visual aids that a witness could use to illustrate his testimony, like maps, models, and diagrams (Mnookin 1998, 43). By the end of the nineteenth century, these visual representations were labelled demonstrative evidence that supported or clarified the oral testimony.

Significantly, the judge ruled that photographic images are allowed to aid a witness in giving a statement only if authenticated by other testimony and when care is taken to first verify that the process by which the photograph was taken, was conducted with skill and under favourable circumstances. Illustrative testimony can be used in court as a source of knowledge only if certain conditions about how it came into being and is used in court are met. In *Art and Knowledge*, James Young states something similar about the epistemic merit of illustrative testimony of works of art:

> A bare statement or an unsupported illustration is not, however, by itself, a source of knowledge. Statements can be false, illustrations deceptive and justification is a necessary condition of propositional knowledge. Testimony can, however, be justified by the reliability of the person who produces it or by the reliability of the process in accordance with which the documentation of testimony is produced. (Young 2001, 67)

Images are not considered an autonomous source of knowledge. They are complex and multivalent, and cannot make any direct claims about truths in this world. Their implied propositions remain vague. A photographic image of a man holding a knife shows us exactly that: a man holding a knife, cut from its larger environment, framed from a certain perspective in a certain place at a certain time. The image needs to be contextualized by conceptual statements for us to understand what it shows: 'This is a picture of the defendant holding the murder weapon that was used to stab his wife.' Additionally, the judge or juror looking at the picture needs to know what grounds he has to accept it as genuine and reliable evidence. The mind-independent part of photography has very often been given as a warrant for its reliability. The legal system decided against this. Justification must come from elsewhere, as photographic images cannot guarantee their truthfulness. This additional source can be an expert's opinion, who can deem a picture a piece of

evidence and admit it in court to create justified true beliefs about the case. Their justification as a source of knowledge is not based on the reliability of the photographic process itself, but on the trust we place in the people and institutions that use or provide us with these images.

Likewise, the epistemic privilege photojournalism enjoys is based on our knowledge of how papers and news channels work. The editor guarantees the professional conduct of his photographers. He has norms in place governing the photographic process and will not publish pictures by photographers that are not sincere and competent. Dominic Lopes argues that such norms or socially imposed restrictions within epistemic photographic practices are why we continue to trust photographs (Lopes 2016, 110 and Walden 2008, 91–110).

Because of imposed norms, we trust images used in court, standard legal, forensic, scientific, medical, or diagnostic practices to be a reliable sources of knowledge. Moreover, we can learn about the world via these photographs, even when they are not accompanied by words or expert testimony, because we often already have true beliefs about the scenes they depict. Their epistemic merit is not warranted by the photograph presented to us, but by what Scott Walden (2005) calls second-order beliefs, or what Jonathan Cohen and Aaron Meskin (2008) call background beliefs. These second-order or background beliefs themselves require a warrant, which is provided by the norms governing photographic practice. Nevertheless, when all these conditions are met, photographic images provide detailed and meaningful testimony about the visual appearance of things in a distinctive way for this image-making process. Objectivity seems to be part of a complex system responsible for the formation of justified true beliefs.

This raises the question: If we need other sources of knowledge to justify using a photographic image as a source of knowledge, does that imply that the epistemic merit of a photographic image is not intrinsic to the nature of the photographic process? If we acknowledge Walden's

proposal, the photographic process is characteristically objective, which forms the groundwork for increased confidence in beliefs formed as a result of looking at photographic images. Not only do these photographic images frequently enable us to form true beliefs, they also enable us to have confidence in those beliefs (Walden 2008, 108). Walden explains photography as an objective process, which excludes the image-maker's mental states from the process that maps features of the original scene onto features of the image. Since most viewers assume that objectively formed images provide better reasons for accepting certain beliefs about this world than subjectively formed ones, they epistemically value these more. Walden cautions us to be wary about beliefs formed via any pictures, photographs included, because it subtends an epistemic arrangement that falls short of certainty. He seems to have a valid point.

Dawn M. Wilson rejects the idea that photography is characteristically objective (Wilson 2021). She claims that the objective part, the registration of the light image on a photosensitive plate, doesn't constitute a photographic image. Neither the formation nor the recording of a light image are sufficient to generate a photographic image. A subsequent step must be made that separates the photographic register from the photographic image and gives it its visible image-bearing properties. In general, this stage is performed by the person who enters a darkroom to develop the film or opens digitally encoded information stored on an SD card using software algorithms. The person controls the outcome in a way that fully depends on their beliefs and skills. The same can be said about what happens more 'upstream' when the photographer chooses the subject through his viewfinder and decides which lenses and camera variables to use (Costello 2017, 450). Belief-based choices are made before and after the photographic event.

According to this New Theory of Photography, a photograph is an image output by a mark-making process that takes input from an electrochem-

ical event that records information from a light image of a pro-photographic scene (Lopes 2016, 81 and Abell 2018, 209). What distinguishes photography from other image-making processes is how light marks a photosensitive material to record information about the pro-photographic event. What happens before or after this moment is entirely up to the person who intends to use this medium to record and represent. Therefore, the mind-dependent stages of the process override the mind-independent recording of visual information.

To make matters even more complex, Lopes argues that objectivity is not reserved for photography. Many scientific illustrators, from biology to archaeology, can mind-independently track features as if they were calibrated drawing instruments. Lopes's argument includes the practice of archaeological drawings that are made by highly specialized artists following strict rules that are laid down in textbooks. Yes, there is a potential for degradation of the quality of visible features, but a faulty camera or dirty lens can cause similar problems. For the expert, these properly drawn artefacts invariably provide more information about prehistoric workmanship, the artefact's form, and diagnostic features than photographs (Lopes 2016, 112). Moreover, drawing and photography are not mutually exclusive. Artists and scientists alike can use information from a photographic recording event to mark a surface and create mixed-media images. The epistemic privilege these images enjoy is based on a mixture of our experiences with the photographic medium and our background beliefs about the objective component of the process.

We know we cannot trust every photographic image to be a truthful depiction of reality, yet we generally tend to trust them more than other images. Milton Gendel's 1982 photo of Leo Castelli shows the contemporary art dealer meticulously dressed in perfect focus with a Jasper Johns *Flag* behind him. At first glance, the picture seems to be a testimony of Castello's visual appearance. Gendel decided to commit to realism and

resemblance. We see an elderly man sitting in front of a painting. If he were still among us, we could probably recognize the person in real life based on this picture. The epistemic merit this photograph holds seems evident. Its reliability as a source of knowledge is partly invoked by the objective character of the photographic process used by Gendel, partly based on what we know about the way Gendel worked, and partly based on our knowledge of socially imposed restrictions by the institutions that published and displayed his work.

Yet, it does so much more than document. This is not a spontaneous snapshot. Even the most minute detail of what would be in the final photo was carefully considered before taking the shot. The presented composition was constructed, not found. Maynard argues that we experience a photographic image as something that is made and something that is made to shape our perception (Maynard 2008, 206). It is about seeing, knowing what one is seeing, and why. The picture counts three elements: the wall, the painting, and the man. Purposely placed, contrasted, and combined, these elements guide our perception. Since we know this picture was intentionally made by using recordings of a light image, we look at it differently from how we do when we consider it as drawn, natural, or accidental. We wonder why it shows the gallery owner in a certain light and why *Flag* and Castelli are placed in the same frame. We get a sense of connection between the gallerist and the work of art; we want to follow the artist's line of thought, and in doing so, take interest in what goes beyond the visual depiction. The photograph shows a reality so minutely cut out of the real world—untouched by space and time—that it creates a new photographic reality. It reveals a connection or an unseen truth that our eyes would have overlooked otherwise. I argue that creating this new understanding of our world has its own epistemic merit. The picture expresses beliefs about the world and that Gendel had about the gallerist, and it warrants beliefs about his visual appearance and deepens our understanding of the connection between Castelli and Jasper Johns. It is appreciated as a

work of art, not despite its epistemic merits, but because of it, held in the balance Gendel created between expressiveness, objectivity, and understanding.

Returning to Lund Point, is the epistemic privilege we grant photographs always deserved or justified? Because photography as an image-producing medium is not always a reliable source of information, I do not believe it is. Very often, the mind-dependent stages of the process override the mind-independent recording of visual information. This is why we need additional sources of knowledge to justify using an image to warrant true beliefs. Does that imply that the epistemic merit of a photographic image is not intrinsic to the nature of the photographic process? So far, my discussion has shown that there is no standard photographic process. It is the photographic practice that ultimately decides what the process will look like (Perini, 2012, 159). Objectivity plays a more dominant factor when we choose to minimize the mind-dependent parts of the process, e.g., by using an algorithm to produce a visual image from the light recording. We do this every day when we use the basic camera settings on our smartphone; we take a snapshot, and an algorithm produces a digital image that we can instantly share with others. Nowadays, however, most of these algorithms already instantaneously edit the light image by using HDR software. Moreover, they are edited by hand—e.g., with a soft portrait filter—before they are shared, giving a more mind-dependent representation of the scene. In other practices, e.g., astronomy, visual information is added to the recording in order to increase its epistemic merit. This approach can be explained by the epistemic virtue of trained judgement (Daston 2007, 314). Most sciences have concluded that absolute objectivity is neither obtainable nor necessary to generate knowledge. What is important is to decide the needed grade of objectivity and how we can procure this by using the media at our disposal.

Visual works of art can be made by using automated mechanisms to

deepen our understanding of everyday objects. Likewise, scientific images can be constructed by adding visual features to recorded information to generate knowledge. The question is when and how, not what.

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Notes on Contributors

DAWN M. WILSON
is a Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Hull and a trustee of the British Society of Aesthetics. She works on language, thought, images, technology, and art. Her 2009 article, 'Photography and Causation', launched a field of debate known as the 'New Theory' of photography and was selected as one of twelve classic texts to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the British Journal of Aesthetics. Her publications include: 'Invisible Images and Indeterminacy: Why we need a Multi-stage Account of Photography' (JAAC 2021), 'Reflecting, Registering, Recording and Representing: From Light Image to Photographic Picture', (The Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 2022), 'Against Imprinting: The Photographic Image as a Source of Evidence' (Social Research: An International Quarterly, 2022), and 'What is a Photographic Register?' (JAAC, 2023).
dawn.wilson@hull.ac.uk

BEN CAMPION
is a PhD student with cross-institutional supervision in the Philosophy Department at the University of Warwick and the School of Media and Performing Arts at Coventry University. His research focuses on the question of how best to understand the agency of the photographer in photographic production and how accounting for their agency affects our understanding of the aesthetic and ethical value of photography.
Ben.campion@warwick.ac.uk

CLAUDIA GIUPPONI
is a PhD student in Philosophy of Art at the Open University. Prior to her PhD she completed a BA and MA in Art History always at the Open University. Her PhD research aims at assessing contemporary theories

of art by considering the long-lost practice of intarsia. Although previously classified as a craft, recent art historical studies have discovered intarsia's relevance in the artistic setting of the Italian Renaissance and its links to the canonical arts (painting, sculpture, and architecture). This represents a challenge to modern and contemporary theories of art, especially the fine arts, from which intarsia has been excluded. The research is interdisciplinary, but strongly influenced by contemporary analytic philosophy.

Claudia.giupponi@open.ac.uk

MIKAEL PETTERSSON

teaches and does research at Lingnan University, Hong Kong. His research is primarily in aesthetics—in particular pictures, photographic or otherwise.

mikaelpettersson@ln.edu.hk

DANIEL STAR

is an Associate Professor of Philosophy at Boston University.

dstar@bu.edu

KIM SCHREIER

is a philosopher, writer and translator. She graduated cum laude from RWTH-Aachen University, holds a Master's Degree in Philosophy and is a member of CHASA – Center for Human-Animal-Studies Aachen. Her research focusses on art and epistemology, exploring how artistic practices can expand our understanding of the world and inspire positive change.

info@kunstbuero22.com

BSA BRITISH SOCIETY OF AESTHETICS

DEBATES *in* AESTHETICS