Photography, production of permanent images by means of the action of light on sensitized surfaces, giving rise to a new form of visual art, historical document, and scientific tool. The history of photographic image-making is the story of the diverse applications of a new and constantly evolving technology. It is a history that includes images at every point on the scale between utilitarian scientific and historical documents and pictures conceived with the highest artistic ambitions. Parallel to it is the history of photographic techniques, in which constant expansion of the technical resources available to photographers led to an ever-increasing range of aesthetic possibilities. Photographic techniques current today are described in the article of that title.

Early Aesthetic Ambitions

From its invention in 1827 and effective introduction in 1839 through the first decades of its application, photography was the subject of debate as to its place among the arts—a fact witnessed by the contemporary literature of photographic criticism. The French painter Paul Delaroche, on first seeing a daguerreotype, made the dramatic claim that “from today painting is dead”. The reality was not so simple. In fact it took many decades for the full impact of photography to be felt on the discipline of painting. Photography eventually liberated painting from the need to be representational, as the camera was able to take on the illustrative role which had previously been that of the artist, freeing painting on its path towards abstraction.

Photography, meanwhile, had yet to fully define its own unique visual language and complex aesthetic potential. At first, photographers leaned heavily on the conventions of picture-making learned from traditional media. William Henry Fox Talbot, one of the earliest pioneers, had explored photographic chemistry in search of a support for his own shortcomings as a draughtsman. He sought an alternative to his pencil to adequately fix on paper the images projected from nature by his drawing aid, the camera lucida. When he published his thoughts on the potential applications of his discoveries, he entitled the work, the first part of which was issued in June 1844, *The Pencil of Nature.* It included a study, “Fruit Piece”, which acknowledged an evident source in the conventions of still life painting. *The Pencil of Nature* also proposed practical applications for the new medium, such as the reproduction of typesetting, which anticipate later exploitations whose basis is technological rather than aesthetic. At this early stage Talbot was confronting the duality of a picture-making medium which achieved perfect facsimile from life.

It is perhaps no coincidence, nor entirely ascribable to the necessarily long exposures, that among the earliest experiments in picture-making by Talbot's contemporary inventor, Louis Jacques Daguerre, are a fine series of painterly still-life studies of artefacts on a window ledge or shelves, and this pursuit of painterly notions of the picturesque dominated the early years of photographic picture-making. The careers of Roger Fenton in England and Gustave Le Gray in France served as exemplary case studies of the dichotomy which photographers endeavoured to resolve between the inherent drama of fact as recorded in the light-sensitive chemicals and their own ambitions to give formal and expressive values to their subject-matter.

Portrait Photography

Portraiture constitutes a substantial proportion of all photographic images created in the 19th century. They satisfied a curiosity to record the features of immediate family and friends as keepsakes and tokens of affection. Photography, meanwhile, allowed for the widespread publication of portraits of important or celebrated subjects, including political figures, royalty, and members of the aristocracy, and celebrities in the worlds of science, literature, and the fine and performing arts.

In the 1840s, the daguerreotype became the favoured process for portrait photographers whose businesses achieved rapid and widespread popularity throughout the United States, Great Britain, France, and elsewhere in Europe. The presentation of the unique daguerreotype plates with gilt mats in velvet-lined leather or embossed paper cases or small frames identified them as precious objects, in the tradition of the precisely painted and exquisitely packaged portrait miniature. Fine hand-colouring reinforced the link with the conventions of miniature painting.

The first extensive portrait project using negatives and prints on paper was that undertaken in 1843 by David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson. Hill, an artist, had determined to paint a historic group portrait of the First General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland. The many photographic portraits made in preparation for this and the studies of Scottish types and distinguished figures which were the fruit of a collaboration that lasted until Adamson's death in 1848 constitute one of the finest legacies from the first decade of photography. Hill and Adamson's calotypes (made with Talbot's process) exploited the limitations of the paper negative, using broad chiaroscuro to considerable aesthetic effect. The daguerreotype, in comparison, though capable of greater clarity and finer detail, gave a more factual, less painterly result. In the hands of such distinguished practitioners as Southworth and Hawes, the portrait daguerreotype was capable of considerable strength by virtue of the very specific power of this clarity, the authority of fact and detail.

Three portrait photographers of the 1850s and 1860s demand attention for their considerable and contrasting achievements. Nadar, in the 1850s, produced a distinguished series of character studies of the great men and women of French Second Empire society. His portraits combine intimacy and a sense of truth, with stark and forceful representations of both the features and personalities of his sitters. In the following decade Julia Margaret Cameron undertook a series of portraits of eminent British subjects and studies of people whose features served her complex purposes. Her portraits, often soft-focused and tight-cropped on the face, are penetrating studies enriched by mystical undercurrents. She extended the scope of portraiture to embrace symbolist and allegorical references. The American Mathew Brady came to prominence during the Civil War and achieved his reputation through the scale and documentary value of his endeavour. He built a historic photographic archive, a dead-pan record of the people shaping the destiny of the nation. By choosing subjects who were famous and influential personages, these and other photographers created images that function simultaneously as portraits and, for later ages, as invaluable historical documents.

Photographic portraits were gathered into albums, in many cases specifically designed to hold images made to the standard carte-de-visite or cabinet formats. Such albums would contain personal collections of family and friends or would become galleries of celebrities, with published portraits contributing to the beginning of the cult of famous personalities which has become so ubiquitous in the 20th century.

Landscape and Topographical Photography

The camera was used to bring to a curious public a visual account of the face of the world. This record embraced the natural landscape and the human impact on that landscape on every scale from agricultural exploitation to the development of cities. Such photographic records inevitably ranged from straightforward factual documents to lyrical interpretations of the subject-matter before the lens. These subjects included picturesque views for the nascent tourist market; records of imperial expansion under the British and French; and, particularly in the United States, documents of the natural wonders of a new continent as it was being explored.

Photographers recorded the route and the sights of the Grand Tour, the leisurely but educational progress through Europe that was a central feature of a privileged upbringing for young British and French aristocrats. Artists and writers too would seek inspiration in Italy, Egypt, and the eastern Mediterranean, which exerted a

strong fascination on the mid-19th century European imagination as the cradle of ancient civilizations and religions. In the 1840s pioneers such as Welsh calotypist Calvert Richard Jones and the French daguerreotypists Jules Itier and Baron Gros made their Grand Tours with a camera, and in the 1850s a few ambitious and courageous travellers took up the challenge of making a comprehensive photographic record of their journeys and returned home to publish portfolios recording what they had seen. The finest of these succeed in evoking the character of the landscapes and the splendour of the ruins that contain the spirit of ancient civilizations. Of particular merit were the photographs of the ruins of ancient Egypt, Nubia, Palestine, and Syria by Maxime du Camp (1852), of Egypt by Félix Teynard (1853), of the Holy Lands by Auguste Salzmann (1854-1856), and of Egypt by Francis Frith (1857).

A group of calotypists working in Rome around 1850, including Giacomo Caneva, Eugène Constant, Frédéric Flachéron, and the expatriate Englishman Thomas Sutton, made a fine and evocative record of the ancient monuments of the city, to be followed over the next decades by talented but increasingly commercial practitioners catering to the growing demand from travellers for records of their sightseeing. These notably included the Scotsman Robert MacPherson, and James Anderson. The Alinari brothers in Florence and Carlo Ponti in Venice also catered to this burgeoning market.

The British were the most successful empire-builders and British photographers were among the most prominent in recording distant corners of the world. India was first documented effectively in the 1850s by photographers associated with the British military forces, notably Captain Linnaeus Tripe and the military doctor John Murray. In the 1860s, Samuel Bourne produced a substantial body of images including the record of his travels in the Himalaya. John Thomson made the most extensive early record of China while Felice Beato, who had partnered James Robertson in recording the Crimean War, went on to establish himself as the leading photographer of Japan and the Japanese.

In the United States, photographers of the landscape tended to work in a large format, commensurate with the vast horizons which they were endeavouring to define. Their work, exemplified at its best in the achievements of William Jackson and Timothy O'Sullivan, conveys a sense of awe at the epic scale of the land which they were discovering and depicting.

In Britain and France the land provided a different kind of inspiration. It fuelled a yearning for romantic images in which photographers, like painters and authors before them, imposed on the landscape their own ideas of the picturesque. They added a lyrical dimension to the image-making process, incorporating transcendental qualities in images which satisfied spiritual rather than merely factual curiosity. Roger Fenton and Henry White in Britain, and Olympe Aguado, Gustave Le Gray, and Victor Régnault in France, were among the most distinguished to explore the rich potential of this vein. Topographical subject-matter meanwhile became the basis of an industry, as exemplified in the transition of Francis Frith from adventurer and traveller to entrepreneur and industrialist, founding a large-scale photographic publishing enterprise.

The Photograph as Document

Photography has provided the technical means of making visual documents of every kind. The camera became the silent yet potent witness of history. Through the 19th century, photographers explored a wide range of documentary functions, defining a genre of which the primary characteristic and attraction was its factual authority. Documentary photographs included records of the way people lived; the scientifically structured examination of mankind, encompassing ethnographical and anthropological records related to imperial expansion as well as medical and associated research, and record-keeping; the recording of major

events such as wars; key moments in political or social history; and a visual account of the great achievements of the century in such areas as architecture, engineering, and technology.

Photographs provide a unique insight into different ways of life. In its first decades, the practice of photography was restricted to a privileged sector of society; thus, many early photographs dwell on the dress, homes, and lifestyles of the wealthy. Such projects as the record of the fishing families of the coast of Fife, Scotland, undertaken in the 1840s by Hill and Adamson, are exceptional. Not until Thomas Annan undertook his documentation of the slums of Glasgow in 1866, or John Thomson made his lively record of London personalities, *Street Life in London* (1877-1878), did working-class types and environments become the more regular subject of photographic documents.

Photographers who travelled the world to bring back records of far lands and their cultures were regularly intrigued by the various peoples they encountered, and were often drawn to the project of making records of their physiognomies, costumes, and practices. The settings in which photographers placed their subjects also revealed their attitudes towards them, ranging from the warmly sympathetic to a degree of detachment bordering on voyeurism. Of exceptional merit were the documents of the peoples of China made by John Thomson, as well as the extensive records of the Japanese made by Felice Beato and subsequently by Stillfried and Anderson, who took over his studio. The peoples of India became the subject of record-making on the part of photographers with the British Imperial forces, and in the United States, Native Americans were the subject of photographic curiosity. Edward Curtis, later in the century, undertook the most comprehensive record of their vanishing ways of life, bringing a considerable degree of expression and an evocative strength to his picture-making that proposed a strongly subjective and interpretative stance to the documentary mode.

Photography was used to establish records of medical phenomena. Physical deformities and curiosities and the visible physical symptoms of disease were documented for teaching and diagnostic purposes. Oscar Gustav Rejlander's photographic illustrations for Darwin's *On the Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872) are an important application of photography to the support of scientific research. In France Duchenne de Boulogne had made comparable experiments in 1862, published as *Méchanisme de la Physionomie Humaine ou Analyse Eléctro-Physiologique de l'Expression des Passions.* Of lasting fascination were the first attempts to explore the consecutive phases of human and animal movement by Eadweard Muybridge and Jules Etienne Marey. The discovery of X-ray photography by W. C. Roentgen in 1895 marked an important development in medical photography.

Through the second half of the 19th century, the camera documented war, though for the most part turning away from scenes of carnage, and unable through practical limitations to achieve the immediacy of 20th-century work in this field. Roger Fenton made a record of the Crimean War, his most powerful image from this conflict being his bleak study of the aftermath of battle, “The Valley of the Shadow of Death”. The dead on the battlefield were documented through the unflinching lens of Alexander Gardner in his record of the American Civil War.

Photography was able to celebrate the greatest achievements of the century, leaving subsequent generations with forceful reminders of the heroic scale of such endeavours as the building of the Crystal Palace, the Eiffel Tower, or the Forth Bridge; the construction of railway networks, finely documented in France by Edouard Baldus; or the construction of the great steel steamship, Isambard Kingdom Brunel's *Great Eastern*, memorably documented by Robert Howlett in 1857.

Photography as Art and as Industry

The collodion on glass negative was introduced in 1851. It combined the fine detail of the daguerreotype and the calotype's potential to print any number of positives; furthermore, unlike these two processes it was freely available for use, unencumbered by patent restrictions. This combination of advantages marked an important step in the evolution of photography. The industrialization of the medium was now possible and by 1860 a broad, industrialized network of picture-making and publishing was in place.

The International Exhibition of 1862, in London, provided a major showcase of achievement in photography and also provided occasion for debate on the status of the medium. There was, notably, a protracted and passionate published discussion in the form of correspondence between Antoine Claudet and Camille Silvy on whether photographic exhibits should be more appropriately included in those galleries devoted to the arts or those devoted to the sciences. Silvy, perhaps surprisingly in view of the beauty and artistic strength of his own work, advocated the latter. There was no right or wrong answer; the argument served, rather, to polarize the ambitions of photographers who, then as now, have often felt the need for a credo. Many worked as artisans, making portraits or other studies in a commercial context and laying claim to artistic merit rather as a technique of salesmanship than from sincere conviction. Others, of varying degrees of talent, made an implicit or declared commitment to artistic creativity. They adopted the painterly genres proposed by the medium's artistic pioneers and further extended their range to embrace the full array of subjects traditionally deemed worthy of the artist's attentions, including floral compositions, picturesque scenes, genre and allegorical studies and studies of the nude.

As if in riposte to the popular banalities of the carte-de-visite or the bland topographical images that were starting to flood the market, a generation of photographers self-consciously pursued more lofty ambitions. British and French photographers generated the richest bodies of work. The French proved more open to studies of the nude, provided the figure was cloaked, as it were, in the pretence of academic or allegorical reference. In Britain, Oscar Gustav Rejlander achieved considerable attention for his genre and allegorical compositions, which frequently included nude figures. His ambitious and controversial tableau “The Two Ways of Life” stands as the paradigm of the process of applying painterly conventions to photographic composition and might be regarded as a precursor of the “constructed” imagery that was to become so important a facet of creative photography in the late 20th century.

Naturalism and the Snapshot

Naturalistic Photography (1889), the seminal text by the British photographer Peter Henry Emerson, advocated the rejection of the contrivance and artifice that had characterized so much “art” photography of the preceding decades. He proposed “straight” photography—that is to say direct from nature—as capable of artistic worth and with aesthetic criteria unique to the medium and not derived from painting. His ideas aroused heated argument. Many were unable to accept that, without intervention either in setting up a composition, reworking a negative, or manipulating a print, the purely mechanical aspect of photography did not preclude artistry. His commitment to expressive picture-making allied with a fidelity to nature established a theoretical basis for the 20th century's advocates of “straight” fine-art photography.

Emerson's ideas were all the more challenging in the context of the contemporary development of popular, easy-to-use cameras, roll film, and faster emulsions. How, it was asked, could the artist distinguish himself from the casual image-maker? Alongside the poetic naturalism of Emerson and the studied artistry of those in pursuit of a painterly idea of the picturesque, there emerged an alternative aesthetic, the random, spontaneous

magic of the “snapshot”, the artless record of life which broke all conventions of picture-making and which ultimately inspired artists to observe life in a fresh, unstructured way.

Paul Martin is often quoted as the exemplary snapshot photographer. His images, from the 1890s and the early years of the 20th century, are a lively record of everyday life. Very often involving groupings of figures, seemingly unposed, they are infused with the artless immediacy of life itself. Much “snapshot” photography was, by its very nature, amateur, and eluded the medium's chroniclers. Jacques-Henri Lartigue started to take photographs as a child in 1901 and demonstrated an innocent curiosity in his animated “snapshots” of a privileged life in France through the early years of the century. Giuseppe Primoli's “snapshots” provide a similarly intimate glimpse of the lifestyle of Rome's aristocracy in the period 1885 to 1905.

The Secessionist Movements

In the closing years of the 19th century an international trend sought fresh approaches to the issue of elevating photography to the level of a fine art. Central to the ambitions of the movement's spokesmen was the desire to reconcile the integrity of the optical and chemical processes with the freedom to make images which could be accepted as the equal of those made by artists in other media. In keeping with the prevalent mood of the *fin-de-siècle* was the perception of art as a precious, rarefied language and the photographers who subscribed to the new definitions of their medium adopted an attitude of exclusivity, marking themselves as the sensitive and enlightened few in the face of the full industrialization and popularization of photography. They positioned themselves emphatically in the ivory tower of high art.

Like-minded photographers formed societies, joining together in the pursuit of shared objectives and making contact with sympathetic groups in other countries. Exchange exhibitions became a key function of these societies and an effective means of giving a momentum to the movement which sought to secede from the commercial and scientific applications of the medium which had remained a part of the core agenda of many established photographic societies. The first of the new societies were established in the 1880s. The Photo-Club in Paris (1883), the Camera Club in London (1885), and the Vienna Camera Club (1891) were followed by the influential Linked Ring Brotherhood established in Britain in 1892 and the Camera Club in New York in 1896. The latter published a journal, *Camera Notes,* edited by Alfred Stieglitz, who was to emerge as the most passionate and influential spokesman of secessionist ideals.

Alfred Stieglitz gathered a talented young group who together formed the Photo-Secession in 1902 under his inspired leadership. Stieglitz published and edited the journal *Camera Work* from 1903 to 1917 and its fine photogravure plates provide a testament to the achievements of the group. From 1905 to 1917 he also ran the Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession at 291 Fifth Avenue, New York, where he exhibited the group's photographs alongside those from other secessionist societies. The gallery also provided a showcase for avant-garde art, both American and European.

The secessionist movements brought to the fore many great talents. In the United States, Stieglitz's disciples included Alvin Langdon Coburn, Frederick Holland Day, Gertrude Käsebier, Edward Steichen, Paul Strand, and Clarence White. In Britain this era of photographic history was marked by James Craig Annan, Frederick Evans, Charles Job, and Francis James Mortimer. In France Robert Demachy made work of particular distinction in the secessionist mode.

Reinventing the Medium—Photography's Revolutionaries

The political and intellectual turmoil of the years around World War I made its mark on photography as in other areas of artistic and literary activity. It would not be an exaggeration to suggest that, while photography had been invented in the late 1830s, it was dramatically reinvented in the years following World War I. The upheaval in social and political structures which found expression in such events as the Russian Revolution and the birth of communism, the Suffragette Movement and the first stages of female emancipation, found their corollary in revolutionary new ideas in the arts. Cubism had broken centuries-old conventions of perspective and the arts were increasingly liberated to explore abstract expression and to delve into the subconscious. Photography, too, was liberated from its pictorial and literal illustrative functions. In the hands of revolutionary practitioners it became a tool for provocative and surreal experiment, was harnessed to political and utopian ends, and was exploited as a picture-making medium capable of a multi-layered simultaneous exploration of the tangible world and the inner world of passions and anxieties.

The emergence of a Modernist photography owed much to the new dynamics explored in Russia by Alexander Rodchenko. He used his camera as a tool of revolution, seeing film and photography as the appropriate picture-making media of the people, rejecting the élitism of easel painting. He found inspiration in the patterns and energy of urban life, and an idealized symbolism in the rhythms of sport. His pictures exploit low or vertiginous vantage points, emphatic diagonals, and graphic devices, paralleling those of constructivist poster artists and typographers of the time. In Germany, as a master at the Bauhaus between 1923 and 1928, László Moholy-Nagy experimented along comparable lines, extending the Modernist repertoire to include photo-collage and totally abstract images, pure games with light. The Italian Futurists used photography as one facet of their politically activist art armoury. Photography was enlisted to a variety of other political causes from the work of Dorothea Lange in recording the Dust Bowl and the problems of migrant workers, to the anti-Hitler photo-montages of John Heartfield or the propagandist celebration of Aryan culture by Leni Riefenstahl.

No single figure, however, had greater impact on the accepted wisdoms of photography than the American artist Man Ray. His first rule was that there were no rules. His earliest photographs, made in New York around 1920, were informed by his espousal of Dadaism; they were ambiguous, irrational, and haunting. Describing himself as a “practical dreamer” it was somehow appropriate that he should devise ways of using the mechanical to express the intangible. He moved to Paris in 1921 and it was there through the 1920s and 1930s that he made his mark at the centre of the avant-garde art scene and through his close association with the Surrealist movement. Man Ray devised new techniques, notably those of making camera-less images, which he called “rayograms”, and of “solarization”, which, through partial tonal reversal, gave a mysterious and ghostly quality to his images. Man Ray's vision opened up an idea of photography as an experimental medium through which to explore the subconscious and to reveal the inherent mystery of subjects. His was a contribution of considerable and lasting influence and importance.

The Purists

While Man Ray, Rodchenko, Moholy-Nagy, and others probed the limits of the medium, other photographers reverted to the camera's fundamental role as a factual recording instrument capable of great clarity and definition. They were purists who shunned the supposed artistry of soft-focus and other effects and, rejecting all trickery, manipulation, or intervention, devoted themselves to capturing the beauty of the natural and man-made world as it presented itself to their lenses.

The Californian Edward Weston, whose first photographs were made in the romantic, soft-focused secessionist mode, shifted his approach around 1920, rejecting his soft lenses for new ones of considerable

sharpness, capable of seeing with a clarity unfamiliar to the human eye. His evolution towards pure photography dependent on high technical accomplishment and a clear and pared-down vision of beauty paralleled that experienced by Stieglitz, Steichen, and Paul Strand. The painter-photographer Charles Sheeler had made his first sharp and rigidly formal studies of American architecture in 1914. None, however, surpassed Weston's power of expression in the purist mode.

Weston's subject-matter included sand-dunes, nudes, vernacular architectural details, memorable studies of shells, peppers, a bed-pan, and a lavatory bowl. He worked slowly, using plate cameras and lenses which could be stopped down to give full depth of field. His techniques of exposure, development, and printing were masterful. The necessarily long exposures demanded static subject-matter, but this suited his contemplative eye. The resulting images defined a new way of looking, dependent on a lyrical point of view and total mastery of technique.

In 1932, Weston became one of the founder members of the *f*/64 group, with Ansel Adams and Willard Van Dyke. They took the name from the small aperture which ensured the depth of field which they so highly prized. Adams achieved a considerable reputation for the heroic scale and vision of his landscape work and for his obsessive pursuit of technical excellence in negative and print. The work and philosophy of the *f*/64 group has enjoyed an extensive and lasting influence.

The work of Walker Evans, whose documentation of aspects of America was initiated in the 1930s, shared the purists' love of formal composition and clarity. One can relate these concerns to those of the Parisian Eugène Atget who had devoted his life to documenting his city, a life's work eventually salvaged by the American Berenice Abbott and hailed as a model by successive generations. Evans, like Atget, made images of great clarity, yet layered with meaning. The German Albert Renger-Patzsch proved his mastery of the purist approach in his book *Die Welt ist Schön* (The World is Beautiful) of 1928.

Photography in Print

The question of photography's status in the art hierarchy was of little interest to the vast majority of the general public for whom the camera provided a means of recording moments from family life and of making keepsake portraits, formal or informal, of family, friends, and associates. The simple image of a loved one could carry a more poignant emotional weight than could any pictorial composition in finely modulated tones on handmade paper. Photography was no longer, by the early 20th century, a novelty or a subject of wonder. It was assimilated into popular culture, available to all as a common language and unifying point of social connection, and never more so than through the widespread distribution of picture-based news and feature magazines which gained momentum through the 1930s.

Although the technical means to reproduce photographs for publication in newsprint had been available for some time, it was not until the 1930s that photographs were widely and effectively exploited in the popular press. Half-tone and gravure presses shifted the balance of the photographic market-place, giving great reach and therefore power to photographers working for the press and magazines, and marginalizing the “artist” photographers whose end product was the fine individual print.

Photographs were already a feature of the leading fashion magazines, notably *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar,* in the pages of which they had, in the 1920s, vied for attention with the work of illustrators. Their rival publishers, Condé Nast and Hearst, recognized the greater potential of photographs as opposed to drawings and competed for the services of the most talented photographers. They gave creative fashion, portrait, and travel opportunities to such gifted image-makers as Cecil Beaton, George Hoyningen Huene, Martin Munkacsi, Man

Ray, Peter Rose Pulham, and Edward Steichen. These two publishing empires have grown to become the most powerful and influential creative forces in the magazine world today.

German and Central European photographers and editors dominated the story of the new picture-led news and feature magazines. Dr Erich Salomon adopted, and Paul Wolff promoted, the use of the new roll-film 35-mm Leica which became the favoured camera of a generation of photo-journalists. German magazines, notably the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* and the *Münchner Illustrierte Presse* became the templates for a new type of publication which brought picture reports of current affairs into millions of homes. In Britain expatriate Hungarian Stefan Lorant, formerly Berlin editor, then editor-in-chief of the *Münchner Illustrierte Presse,* launched the small-format features magazine *Lilliput* in 1936 and *Picture Post* in 1938, commissioning work from a roster which included Bill Brandt, Brassaï, Bert Hardy, and Felix Man. In the United States, *Life* magazine, first published in 1936, gave challenging opportunities to Margaret Bourke-White, Alfred Eisenstaedt, Robert Capa, and others, in search of new stories and features.

The greater freedom provided by the use of roll film and the new emphasis on extended features encouraged many photographers to think in terms of the photographic essay, the picture story as against the single all-embracing image. This approach in turn encouraged a generation of photographers to publish books around certain themes. Among the most distinguished results were the documentation of German types, *Antlitz der Zeit* (1929) by August Sander, Brassaï's low-light images of Parisian life, *Paris de Nuit* (1933), and Brandt's first books on the British, *The English at Home* (1936), and *A Night in London* (1938).

Humanist Photography and The Family of Man

The progress of photo-journalism was shaped by the traumas of war through the 1930s and 1940s. Photographers confronted the moral dilemma of their task. They recognized that they could use their cameras not just to record events but to influence the way the public responded to these events. Their concern and commitment could shape attitudes and in turn shape history. Photographers realized that they could play a determining role. They cherished and promoted the concept that photography could perform a genuine reforming function and bind mankind through its definition of universal humanist aspirations.

The defining celebration of this idea of a humanist photography was the 1955 exhibition *The Family of Man,* billed as “The greatest photographic exhibition of all time—503 pictures from 68 countries—created by Edward Steichen for The Museum of Modern Art, New York”. The exhibition was conceived to demonstrate photography's process “of explaining man to man” and as “a mirror of the universal elements and emotions in the everydayness of life—as a mirror of the essential oneness of mankind throughout the world”.

A group of photographers who shared their commitment to a “concerned” photography formed an agency and co-operative in 1947. Magnum Photos has maintained a reputation for documentary work of the highest moral integrity. Its distinguished membership has included founding members Robert Capa, Henri Cartier-Bresson, George Rodger, and David Seymour, Werner Bischof, who joined in 1949, and W. Eugene Smith, from 1955 to 1959. Magnum's most celebrated member, Henri Cartier-Bresson, is widely acknowledged as one of the century's greatest photographic talents, distinguished by his ability, through a long and versatile career, to work swiftly and discreetly to capture without premeditation the telling or “decisive” moment.

War and natural disaster have never ceased to draw photographers, though the immediacy of television has usurped the role of the great picture magazines, and political and military censors, aware of the impact of photographs on public opinion, have greatly restricted the photographer's freedom of movement. Don McCullin, whose harrowing images of the Vietnam War, the famine during the Biafran War, and other

tragedies for *The Sunday Times* brought the persuasive reality of these events to public awareness, was refused permission to document the Falklands War.

Independent Post-War Photography

In the late 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s there was a variety of developments in the sphere of independent photography. The very concept of the independent photographer as a lone individual following a personal agenda and not obligated to any paymaster took shape during these years. The private odysseys undertaken by Robert Frank, albeit under a Guggenheim fellowship, or by Diane Arbus, after turning her back on commercial commissions, are potent testaments to the potential of the independent approach. Within this framework, photography provided the means to explore simultaneously the world and the self.

Robert Frank's *Les Américains,* published in 1958 (*The Americans,* 1959), was a landmark project in the realm of independent photography. The book revealed an intimacy and an ambiguity in the photographer's response to his adopted country, challenging narrow concepts of technical perfectionism and emphasizing feeling over formal values. Perhaps it suggested that photography should be understood as a kind of anguished visual poetry rather than a graphic art. The same claim might be made by Arbus's haunting documents of haunted human beings. Even the generation of American independent formalists who achieved prominence after the war, embracing such diverse talents as Harry Callahan, Aaron Siskind, and Minor White, sought to use formal graphic structures only as an access to poetic and transcendental meanings within.

American photography was particularly adventurous through these years, not least because the medium received wide critical and sponsorship support. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, played an important role through its exhibition, publication, and collecting programme. The 1967 exhibition, *New Documents*, presented the work of Arbus, Lee Friedlander, and Garry Winogrand and gave a fresh and more profound meaning to the notion of the document, marking the passing of the benevolent, humanist attitudes hitherto associated with the word. The 1978 review exhibition of American photography since 1960, *Mirrors and Windows,* acknowledged the endeavours of a generation of independent photographers to come to grips with the bewildering character of the photograph as an object with its own existence, at once a mirror of the photographer's sensibilities and a window on the world.

Photography in the Consumerist Market-Place

The process of post-war reconstruction and its attendant boom in consumerism created a new society in which improved communications played a key role. Just as a mass market for tourism had developed in the 19th century, so in the 20th century consumer magazines covering fashion, decoration, the arts, lifestyle, and special-interest subjects enjoyed a considerable and expanding success among the general population and shaped perceptions through both their editorial and advertising pages. The explosive growth of advertising via television and the print media fuelled an appetite for goods and services and created an alternative, illusory world of aspirational images mirroring those promoted through the editorial pages. The skills of commercial photographers give a veracity to these images of desire and their seductive pictures help maintain the cycle of fantasy and wish-fulfilment, manufacture and consumption.

The consumer market-place has become the major driving force in commercial photographic image-making through the second half of the 20th century. The improved quality of colour films and the greatly increased standards of reproduction in the print media have enhanced picture-making possibilities. Much work, nonetheless, is produced by journeymen photographers fulfilling a straightforward brief to illustrate a product,

be it a garment, food, a means of transport, or a holiday location, and it is ultimately of little lasting interest or merit. For a smaller number of passionate photographic image-makers, however, the commercial context provides the ideal combination of defined objectives, practical resources, and audience through which they are able to explore and express their fascination with aspects of the world.

Irving Penn, working as a photographer under contract since the 1940s to Condé Nast in the United States, perfectly exemplifies the way in which a creative integrity can be protected and indeed nurtured in the commercial context. Penn has honed his rigorous vision to celebrate fashion, to photograph food, beauty products, or still-life assemblages, and to make memorable portraits. His criteria have always been the need to bring the magazine page to life and to capture the fickle reader's attention.

Penn's work electrified *Vogue* in the years after the war, while his contemporary Richard Avedon brought his own energy and enthusiasm to the fashion pages of *Harper's Bazaar.* Both magazines have become synonymous with quality, as inspired and adventurous patrons of photography. *Vogue,* in the person of Alexander Lieberman, recognized the raw energy in the documentary work of William Klein and encouraged him to make incisive and satirical fashion work for a decade from the mid-1950s. *Harper's Bazaar* published the work of Diane Arbus, Robert Frank, and Lisette Model. Both magazines have enjoyed particular high points. The French edition of *Vogue,* for example, became the monthly showcase in the 1970s for the imaginative and provocative work of Helmut Newton and Guy Bourdin, photographers who extended the limits and potential of fashion and beauty photography.

Symptomatic of the public curiosity for the world proposed in photographic images has been the cult of celebrity. Andy Warhol explored the power of celebrity images in his own work and identified their role as pagan icons in the popular culture of a consumer society. His magazine *Interview* was predicated on the cult of fame. Annie Liebowitz and Helmut Newton have made their mark in this genre through their work for *Vanity Fair.* The public appetite for photographic images knows no limits and commercial photography has evolved countless specialist categories with their own standards and their own exceptional practitioners, sometimes celebrated, often unsung. The photography of cars, food, wildlife, fashion, beauty, celebrities, naked flesh, sport, architecture, or interiors demand special skills and in a highly competitive market, the best work achieves remarkable standards. Witness the fashion work of the successors to Avedon, Penn, Newton, and Bourdin, younger talents such as Arthur Elgort, Nick Knight, Peter Lindbergh, Ellen Von Unwerth, and Bruce Weber; the erotic work of James Baes and Francis Giacobetti; the fine interiors of François Hallard and Horst; the architectural studies of Ezra Stoller; or the witty food photography of Tessa Traeger.

Recent Trends and Post-Modern Photography

In the 1980s, the photographic world witnessed the emergence of a generation of practitioners, unconnected yet sharing in common a sense that they were artists first and foremost, and photographers only because light-sensitive emulsions were the chosen medium for their artistic expression. Even where the work was purely photographic, straight from life, and without any manual intervention, these practitioners emphasized their allegiance to the world of art by various means. One obvious pattern was the tendency to use a large, mural format; another was in giving consideration to the framing and presentation of the work as integral to the process of creation. Some photographers framed up series of pictures and hung them as installations or added typography or gestural markings. All pursued new options in the desire to make artefacts which distanced themselves from the conventional small-format fine print. These artists sought and found the support of contemporary art dealers, critics, and collectors and redefined the frame of references in which their photographs were to be perceived. The American Robert Mapplethorpe was a pioneer in terms of format and presentation as well as a challenger of taboos in his subject-matter, while Cindy Sherman has constructed

elaborate tableaux around the theme of identity and image with herself as the constantly metamorphosed subject. She too has favoured a large scale.

Much work has been produced in an idiom which is generally dubbed “Post-Modern” in as much as, like Post-Modern architecture and design, it is self-referential; photographers have created works around the subject of photography itself, fascinated by the contradictions and conceptual complexities of the image-making process. John Baldessari and Richard Prince share a fascination with the mysteries of the mediated image which they translate into challenging constructions.

Others, meanwhile, work “straight”, from life yet with a more evident subjectivity than documentarists of previous eras. The very concept of photographic truth seems outmoded within the work of such penetrating individual eyes as Tina Barney, William Eggleston, and Martin Parr, new colourists who translate the physical world into a disconcerting two-dimensional alternative.

Contributed By:
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