

**DISOBEDIENCE TO THE SYSTEM AND THE MACHINE:
PHOTOGRAPHIC ALTERATIONS OFF-SCREEN**

Part of the Final Master's Project
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1. INTRODUCTION

An image is something created within a set of perceptual norms upon which we accept a convention. It can be said that the world, which is another representation, can contain all future possibilities of images. Because the world is capable of constructing all images, even that of the atom, which will never be the atom itself, but only the image of the atom.

Borges describes the Aleph, the point that concentrates and stores all images, in the following terms: "The mystics, in a similar trance, The emblems: to signify divinity, a Persian speaks of a bird that is all birds; Alanus de Insulis, of a sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere." (Borges, 1988, p. 169). This idea of Alanus to which Borges refers can be understood more clearly if we imagine drawing, from any point, concentric circles with an ever-increasing radius. We cover more and more of the plane with them, but, however distant any point may be, we can "link" it, reach, from any center, as far as we wish. Thus, we have a circle whose center is everywhere, but whose circumference we cannot draw, because the radius is infinite; the circumference, like the horizon, is always beyond, nowhere. Moving it to the three-dimensional, visible universe shown by the Aleph is a sphere, which one can imagine as infinite, but also as its contraction: "a small sphere that imprisons all images in a single point." (Martínez, 2003). A similar idea is contained in the Simurgh of the Sufis, the bird that no one ever sees, and which, although it is usually represented as a bird, is not, but is the thirty birds.

We could dedicate much space to unraveling what an image is (which is not the same as unraveling what photography or art is) and how some images are possible while others are impossible. This notion is also affected by cultural context, since, for example, for Arabs there are impossible images, insofar as they are iconoclasts; for our Western tradition, replete with icons and represented symbols, all images are possible as long as someone creates them, thinks about them, or notices them; if we want to adopt a Platonic perspective, that is, accepting the premise that ideas exist and only the process reveals them.

An image, therefore, reflects, by moving away from the representative act, capacity, sensitivity. That is to say, it is subject to a series of circumstances. Without delving into philosophical concepts, it is worthwhile to focus on the philosophy presented in *The world as will and representation* by Schopenhauer. In this work, which begins with the phrase "the world is my representation," Schopenhauer argues that natural objects and beings lack real existence beyond representation. Thus, it is the thing *in itself* the one that has a *true existence*, which the philosopher identifies as the *willpower*.



Figure 1: Illustration of the Simurg ('only'). Al-Qazwini, *Wonders of creation* ('*Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt wa gharā'ib al-mawjūdāt*), U. S. National Library of Medicine (MS P 2, fol. 187b).

Henri Cartier-Bresson, in the *Proust Questionnaire* When asked which virtue is the most overrated, Vanity Fair responds that it is "efficiency." (Vanity Fair, 1998, p. 256) The Royal Spanish Academy (RAE) defines efficiency as the "ability to achieve the desired or expected effect." It is understandable, then, that for a long time error was not interpreted as something effective, but rather as its opposite. That is to say, error is the lack of efficiency of a system. But it is also delay or deviation.

For a long time, what was considered a mistake was of no use within acceptable photographic standards, but over time, movements emerged that embraced what was previously understood as error. Images are not totemic, as "the other" Bresson, Robert Bresson, said, because there is never just one story. Bresson did not film to illustrate a thesis or to show people limited to their external appearance, but to discover the stuff they are made of: "to reach that 'heart' that cannot be captured by poetry, philosophy, or drama." (Bresson, 2017). According to Bresson, "the image does not have an absolute value. Images and sounds will owe their value and power only to the use we assign to them." *Cinépanorama*, 1960).

From this point of view, the image is an element of translation of a reality to which we are sensitive through a series of devices.

This shift also allows us to question the structures that determine which images are valid. The cultural institution (especially the museum) has historically functioned as a space of legitimation, establishing not only what is culture, but also from what perspective it should be viewed. The point here is not to question the museum itself, but to analyze how its use contributes to the construction of cultural elites that define the criteria of value.

In photography, this logic translates into the imposition of methods, devices, and results deemed correct. The camera thus becomes the guarantor of a supposed objectivity, while other forms of production are relegated to the margins. The result is a photographic language conditioned, at times, by rules that limit its expressive possibilities.

It is precisely in this context that disobedience becomes necessary. From this perspective, it is pertinent to draw a parallel with the history of women in art: traditionally excluded from central spaces, they have developed practices from the margins, using media considered minor or displacing existing languages.

We can see an example of this in the artist Anni Albers, who dedicated her life to design and textiles, since women at the Bauhaus were only allowed access to certain types of studies, those considered feminine, and one of these was the world of textiles. She took what was considered a "minor art" and elevated it to its highest potential.

This same transformation is what we intend to present in this work. To do so, we will examine a series of examples that meet the conditions for constructing an alternative theory (or rather, lateral) of photographic aesthetics. A theory that is related to *prowl*. In this regard, a question arises: does something that prowls in the shadows disappear when it becomes official? Does it cease to inhabit the margins and become part of the established structure? It depends on how we use it, but it also depends on the point in history we are at, since, depending on the context, mere existence, mere action, is in itself transgressive. The statement by Marguerite Duras, who declared that the mere fact of being a woman and making films made her a revolutionary, is very expressive in this sense (McNulty, 2019).

We can draw a parallel between this stance and the act of disobedience in the context of photography. Disobedience is a political position in itself. Questioning the camera as the standard-bearer of official photographic aesthetics always signifies the beginning of a rupture or an opening, because even when the projects have been awarded or recognized, they do not lose their subversive value.



Figure 2: Anna Atkins. *Oriental poppy*. Cyanotype. Victoria & Albert Museum Collection, PH.381-1981.

Just recall the case of Anna Atkins, who, although she used cyanotype to create a series of artistic prints with scientific intent, is a clear example of the refinement of a technique. Her contribution was largely forgotten in favor of others (all men), who ended up using cyanotype or inventing other techniques considered photographic, thus relegating this technique to obscurity, even though it was a perfectly valid technique in its own right.

Returning to the official status of images, to the construct, the structure, the consensus on what is correct or what fulfills the objectives established as a precept, what I find interesting, from a personal point of view, is investigating ways to deconstruct it, and applying them myself, as a woman; that is, as someone who is also under scrutiny of the construct, the structure, and the mechanism. My way of confronting disobedience to images and their production methods, therefore, runs parallel to the place I occupy in the world. In my specific case, I am interested in linking my experience to the structural question, that is, the mechanics of an object that serves me to fulfill a specific function, which is to extract images correctly, as well as discussing the invisible processes, the erroneous acts that serve to dismantle the hegemonic officialdom, in this case from the photographic perspective or from the photographic image.

The final thesis, the reflection that fuels this work, is that, in reality, there are no erroneous images. There may be flawed images, or images that have arisen from error, but there are never erroneous images. The imposition of officialdom on images, or the possibility of images in a specific way interspersed with many other specific ways, is ultimately a hegemonic approach.



Figure 3: Paula Elena Ramos. Research process for the project *No heaven behind*. Intervention with internal masks on an Ektar 100 reel shot at 400. 2022.

2. ON ARTIFACTS AND CONTEXT

Style is built by persisting in error. That is, style, in the sense of one's own voice, is only achieved by making numerous mistakes. But, in reality, when I refer to "persisting in error," I want to redefine committing it consecutively, not with the intention of correcting it, but of reiterating it, which is how we find it in photography centered on disobedience. Disobedient photography builds its style by persisting in error.

Error often stems from what lies beyond our control. And what lies beyond our control is often perceived as magical. There is something unknown, something magical, about the camera obscura, about what happens inside the device, which remains hidden from our view.

The space that remains hidden from view is also a space where disobedience can be born. Turning our attention once again to *the other thing*, to the non-dominant, and entering the arena of performance in relation to photography, as well as the terrain of "machinery" and "the body", it is important to remember uses of the concept of camera obscura taken to the field of performance and feminism, such as *Touch cinema (TAPP und TASKINO)* from VALIE EXPORT (1968). This action, which on the one hand criticizes the objectification of women, invites us to think about how to lose control of the inside of the camera by losing visual control of the action.



Figure 4: VALIE EXPORT. Touch cinema (TAPP and TASTKINO). 1968

Other disobedient groups included the hedonists, who are undoubtedly considered when addressing works where the focus is on the body in its various senses. We could speak of Apollo and Dionysus and the fall of man as a central figure, of the irruption of the Dionysian, of the prominence of excess, of fragility, of the feminine, of the body. An example can be found in the fragmented and “electric” dancers of Christos Papadopoulos, a living system of ten dancers who pulsate and coordinate, attract and repel each other, tracing orbits that follow the mechanisms of nature. Because we are all electrically charged ions.



Figure 5: Christos Papadopoulos. Performance *Ion*. Photograph: Elina Giounanli, 2019.

2.1. The apparatus, the machine, the body

In his interesting work *Photography is dead, long live photography!* Laura González-Flores (2018, pp. 15 and 172) proposes the meaningful practice of photography as a *plurivocal plot of meaning*, limitable in extension and analogous. Put into practice, this framework of elements cannot leave the device itself out of the equation.

Although the camera represents an important technical factor in photography, it is rarely mentioned when discussing photographic images. It is taken for granted that different devices have been used, sometimes in combination and sometimes not. Sometimes these elements are sometimes highlighted for their importance in the final concept, and sometimes not. Here, we will address the interpretation of the image by referring to the syntax produced by the technology used so that the process, so important when referring to photography, does not disappear.

Dubois also develops the subject of photographic essence in his book *The photographic act*, and his understanding of the environment reminds us of the epistemological association that Aristotle establishes between modes of *aiesthesis* sensibility and *technical* technology in *From Anima* (Aspe, 1993).

Although much research has been published on the subject, there is still much to explore regarding the influence of technology on the essence, values, and purposes of photography. González Flores (2018, p. 40) points out that it is not so much due to a total absence of authors who have reflected on the issue in recent years, among whom he mentions Jonathan Crary (the camera obscura), Joel Snyder (the camera's vision, A. D. Coleman (lens culture), William Crawford (old emulsions) and others, but rather to the limited “integration of these reflections into the dominant historical discourse of the medium.”

We eliminate many expressive possibilities every time we ignore the constructibility of symbols on the part of the apparatus. Paying attention to it means discovering what the machine can give us from a symbolic point of view.

2.2. Stagecraft, magic, theatre

The image is magical because of its capacity to conjure a presence; because it is, in itself, a remnant of what is represented within it and even an extension of its existence. There are numerous examples of this interpretation that predate the invention of photography. From portraits as substitutes for the person –even valid in legal proceedings, such as sentencing in effigy– to research into X-rays as a possible method for portraying the soul, or the fear of photographic processes as a perverse system for capturing it. steal itTo its owner, humanity has always felt this idea of real existence, whether material or spiritual, in the image.

The challenge lies in maintaining awareness of the device, of the technology, without stifling surprise or fascination. It's about simply looking at a toy from the inside. The wonder, like a flash of insight that comes to us upon discovering the simple, rudimentary workings of a puppet theater, could be likened to a moment of illumination, to the sense of presence that photography evokes.

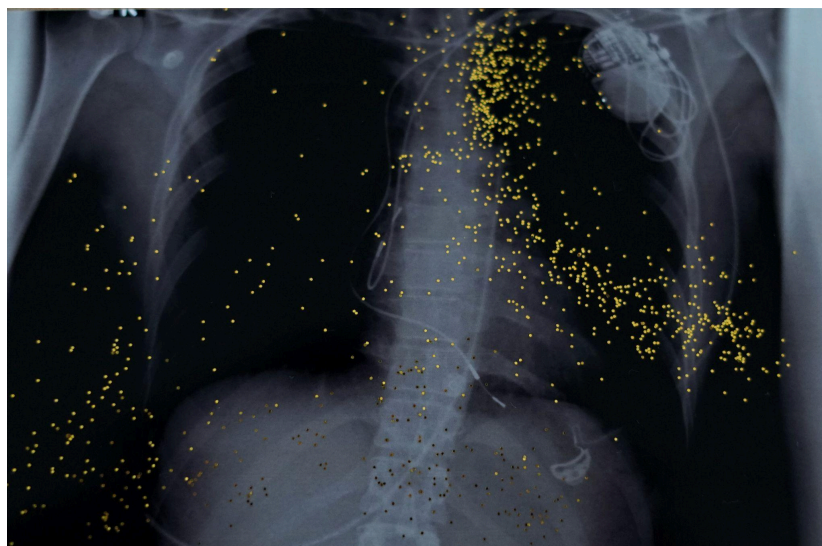


Figure 6: Paula Elena Ramos. Research process for the project *No heaven behind*. Photograph of an X-ray of the author after being treated with glitter. 2022.

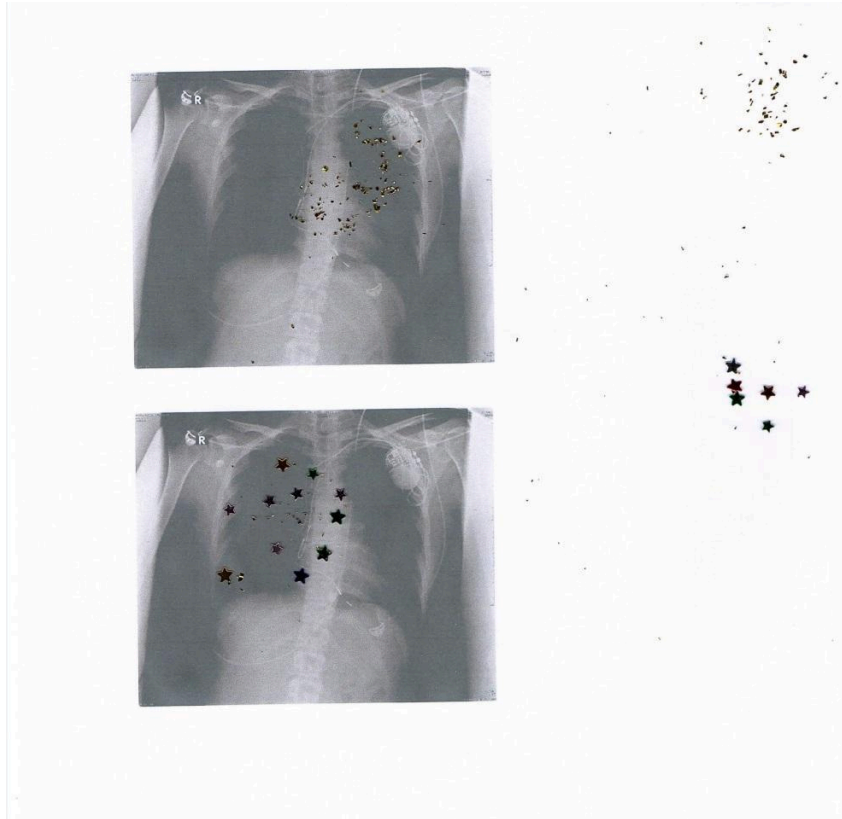


Figure 7: Paula Elena Ramos. Research process for the project *No heaven behind*. X-ray scans of the author digitized by introducing glitter and decorative stars into the scanner. 2022.

3. ANALYSIS OF WORKS

In the previous chapter, I addressed the concept from which we begin. Next, we will discuss the themes, divided according to the type of work. The selected projects will be categorized based on their relationship to censorship and politics, memory and catastrophe, the body itself, nostalgia and beauty, and contemporary obsession.

I divide the projects into these sections because they represent different layers of the geography that constitutes error, disobedience, and being a sick body within the world of image creation. They achieve this by intervening in the apparatus, in its internal structures, and also by intervening in the apparatus's output, as an allegory for the knowledge that all images already exist. This is a reflection we saw in the introduction and to which we will return in the conclusion.

3.1. Politics and censorship

The use of negatives and their manipulation as a narrative form is a way of addressing both error and the apparatus. The main discourse in the projects compared below focuses on one or the other.

“NEGATIVES” de XU YONG

These photographic negatives were taken during the censored Tiananmen Square protests in Beijing, China, on June 4, 1989.

According to this author, negatives have a greater impact as evidence than ordinary photographs because they evoke an attempt to induce amnesia after a historical event. Furthermore, he points out that, to truly understand the photograph's full message, a development process must be completed. Therefore, that showing *halfway* to the world, a historical fact is a way of talking about censorship, about what is hidden.

Xu Yong presents a negative image to remind us that the Tiananmen Square massacre is still taboo in public discourse. At the same time, he raises questions about people's collective memories following the events of June 4, 1989.

A relevant aspect of his method is that it compels the viewer to search, to scrutinize the negatives to decipher what is happening in those images. The sensations this produces are key to complete the objective of this work.

He presented his work in the book *Negatives*, published in 2015 by New Century Press, Hong Kong.



Figure 8: Xu Yong. Two images from the project *Negatives1989*. (Published in 2015)

"UNDER THE BLACK SUN" by MILAGROS DE LA TORRE

From 1991 to 1993, Milagros de la Torre worked in *Under the Black Sun*. The photographs were taken using a rudimentary technique employed by street photographers in Cusco, Peru. This involved taking small passport-style photos directly onto photographic paper with a custom-made wooden camera. The exposed paper was developed inside the camera itself, using developer and fixer in recycled cans. As the negative was removed to dry under the intense mountain sunlight, a layer of Mercurochrome was applied to the subject's skin. This hand-painted red negative was then photographed again to produce the classic ID photo.

The Mercurochrome retouching process functioned as a filter that lightened the skin of the person photographed. This gave them what they called a "racial enhancement," making their skin appear whiter and, therefore, with the express intention of projecting a higher socioeconomic, aesthetic, and cultural standing.

Milagros de la Torre uses images suspended midway through the process, during the negative stage, with the applied red veil still covering the skin. As she herself indicates, "something important about this work is the questioning of how, through its own technical essence, photography becomes destabilized and loses authority as a record" (de la Torre, 2022).

The author repeats this technique in *Untitled (Hanger, Stocking...)* From 1992, but her focus in this case is on a feminine theme. In this project, garments are presented as inverted negative images.



Figure 9: Miracles of the Tower. "Polyptych", *Under the black sun*. 1991-1993. Hand-painted toned silver gelatin, Mercurochrome.

The work of Milagros de la Torre has been the subject of various exhibitions and publications, among which her most recent monograph was published in 2012. A complete overview of her work and a full list of her publications is available on her website, which is cited in the Bibliography.

“KILLED NEGATIVES” por ROY E. STRYKER

Roy E. Stryker, head of the Information Division of the Farm Security Administration (FSA), launched a historic photographic initiative between 1935 and 1944.

It is well known that, in order to talk about rural poverty in the United States, the FSA commissioned photographers, including Walker Evans (1903–1975) and Dorothea Lange (1895–1965), to document rural life after the Great Depression.

The history of this historical documentary project often omits the ruthless editing method Stryker employed for the final selection. The negatives of each rejected image were perforated with a hole punch so that, if printed, the image would show a black disc over elements of the image.

This project presented prints made from some of the rejected negatives, as well as the photographers' personal and administrative records. Responses by contemporary artists to these images were also included.

The photographs transform an act of censorship into abstract, conceptual images that are difficult to appreciate in their beauty.

They were the subject of an exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in London under the title *Killed Negatives. Unseen Images of 1930s America* (May 16 to August 26, 2018). The FSA photographers whose work was exhibited included Paul Carter, Jack Delano, Walker Evans, Theodor Jung, Dorothea Lange, Russell Lee, Edwin Locke, Carl Mydans, Arthur Rothstein, Ben Shahn, John Vachon, and Marion Post Wolcott. The images were displayed alongside contemporary works by several artists who work with this material: Etienne Chambaud, Bill McDowell, William E. Jones, and Lisa Oppenheim.



Figure 10: Russell Lee, *Untitled* possibly related to: *Mr. Tronson, farmer near Wheelock, North Dakota, August 1937* Library of Congress (USA), Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection, LC-DIG-fsa-8a22121. Digital reproduction from a 35mm black and white negative.



Figure 11: Carl Mydans, *Untitled* (detail), possibly related to: *Transients clearing land. Prince George's County, Maryland, November 1935.* Library of Congress (USA), LC-DIG-fsa-8a00531.

3.2. Archive, environment, memory, loss. The fragility of history and of our lives

In the cases described below, the context of censorship or politics is accidental or indirect, because the alteration stems from conservation conditions, environmental factors, and other tangential elements that are present in some places but not others, influencing the way of life. This affects historical memory and fosters certain policies of erasing events, almost in a seemingly innocent or inevitable way.

There is undoubtedly a syntax in the marks or traces left by tools on a work, marks that hold its symbolic content. Walter Benjamin, in his *A brief history of photography*, proposes an optical unconscious composed of visual qualities that appear in the image through its technology (without the author's intervention) and that produce a perception of reality impossible to achieve by natural means.

“THE GIFTED MOLD ARCHIVE” by CÉDRIC KOUAMÉ

Gifted Mould It is a project that begins with the collection of historical photographs affected by the humid climate of Côte d'Ivoire. The artist Cédric Kouamé accepts the natural damage caused to the photographs and reinterprets them as new works of art.

A matter as fundamental to the survival of archives as conservation becomes an almost insurmountable obstacle in regions prone to harsh climates, where paper, emulsion, and other photographic materials are extraordinarily affected by insect infestations, fungal attacks, and other deterioration resulting from humidity and unsuitable temperatures. These are the conditions in the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, where the preservation of historical objects is extremely difficult, resulting in the impossibility of generating a solid corpus of the country's visual history.

Cédric Kouamé grew up in Abidjan, the largest city in Ivory Coast. The project stems from his concern about the lack of both photographs and historical artifacts in his hometown, which led him to collect everything he could get his hands on.

This project is a collection of vintage photographs, primarily from the 1970s and 1980s, depicting various social and vernacular scenes in Côte d'Ivoire. The title Kouamé chose refers to their state of preservation. Upon noticing the mold covering his family photographs, instead of discarding them, he embraced their deterioration as an integral part of his aesthetic, working to preserve them as new works of art.

The artist himself has described his compilation process:

In Abidjan, there used to be three shops where you could get film developed, but when I returned there after a few years away, only one remained, in a neighborhood on the outskirts of the city. I went there to get some film developed and asked the guy who worked there how they disposed of damaged or unused photographs. He led me to a giant space that held a ton of negatives and prints that had begun to mold. I put on gloves and started going through everything, picking out anything that caught my eye because of its mold, and that's when this really became a bigger project. (Lachowskyj, 2018)

Some images from this project can be seen on the author's Instagram account (@kccedric). LensCulture magazine featured an article about it in 2018 (Lachowskyj, 2018).



Figure 12: Cédric Kouamé. *Gifted Mold Archive*, s. f. Reproduced in *Lens Culture*, 2018.

“OTSUCHI FUTURE MEMORIES” by ALEJANDRO CHASKIELBERG

This project is a reflection on the dynamic relationship between archival photographs from the family album and community memory after tragedies, in this case, the most powerful earthquake that Japan has suffered, on March 22, 2011, which was accompanied by a tsunami and an unprecedented nuclear disaster in the country.

“The waves, which at their highest point reached 40 meters above sea level, traveled up to 10 kilometers inland. The fishing village of Otsuchi in Japan’s Iwate Prefecture was probably the most affected” (Chaskielberg, 2016). Around 10% of its population perished, and 60% of its buildings were damaged. The death of the mayor and numerous municipal officials brought administrative functions to a standstill.

“In the midst of this chaos, people began to recover family photographs they found among the rubble.” In this gesture, we see how, despite everything, they tried to keep Otsuchi’s memory safe.

The project presents a visual documentation of destruction and loss, connecting portraits of Otsuchi survivors with family photographs recovered after the disaster. The Otsuchi survivors are portrayed in the spaces where their homes once stood.

“The colors of the destroyed photographs—distorted and blurred images, altered by the effects of salt water—sometimes created new colors or blended existing ones. These colors were revalued through an exercise in color archaeology, where each of the colors found in the destroyed photographs was used to color the portraits I took of the survivors,” he explains. Thus, the colors constitute a bridge that connects the past with the present, establishing a dialogue between the two. (Chaskielberg, 2016).



Figure 13: Alejandro Chaskielberg. "Family Album." Otsuchi, Iwate Prefecture, Japan. 2012.

*Otsuchi Future Memories*It offers a reflection on the dynamic relationship between family photographs and our memories when such tragedies occur.

This project was selected for the Magnum Photography Awards 2016 by jury member and Magnum photographer Martin Parr and Awarded the V Ibero-American Photobook Prize.



Figure 14: Alejandro Chaskielberg. "Recovered Satellite Image." 2012.



Figure 15: Alejandro Chaskielberg. "Three Generations." Tomoko Hida, Sana Hida, and Yoshimi Hida (mother, daughter, and grandmother) pose in the ruins of their home a year and a half after it was destroyed by the tsunami. 2012.

“GIVING BIRTH” by AMY FRIEND

Amy Friend's aim is to use photography as a medium that explores the relationship between the visible and the invisible (Friend, 2021). She has worked on the series *Give birth to* Since 2012, starting with old photographs recovered from various locations, this project explores memory and the fragility of life. It doesn't focus on environmental circumstances or tragic events that radically alter memory, but rather on the intimacy of archives, both personal and those of others, using an intervention technique that makes us aware of the fragility of life and time.

Through manipulated interventions, it alters and subsequently rephotography. The images, “remaking” photographs that oscillate between presence and absence, aim to comment on the fragility of the photographic object, but also the fragility of our lives, of our history. By employing the tools of photography, he “reuses” light, allowing it to shine through the holes. In a playful yet literal way, he returns the subjects of the photographs to the light, while simultaneously “bringing them forward,” in a rebirth, a “giving birth,” as his name suggests.

Light becomes a presence, used metaphorically to allow for new interpretations. Each piece has a meaningful title. Some come directly from annotations written on the photographs. Those without any indication of origin were titled by referencing the nuances and technical processes of photographic production as a medium, as well as highlighting how we interact with these images.



Figure 16: Amy Friend. “Afterglow”, *Give birth*. Since 2012.



Figure 17: Amy Friend. "Dec. 11, 1916", *Give birth*. Since 2012.



Figure18: Amy Friend. "We are Reflections", *Give birth*. Since 2012.

This technique has also been used by Yael Martínez for her project *The Flower of Time. Guerrero's Red Mountain*, winner of the World Press Photo 2022 in the Photo Contest for the North and Central America region (World Press Photo, 2022).



Figure19: Yael Martínez. The Flower of Time. Guerrero's Red Mountain. 2022.

3.3. The body itself, self-referentiality

In this case, the reference to the sick body is addressed with examples that have intervened or used the machine as a body, that is, the apparatus as an element to intervene on, in one way or another, to refer to one's own corporeality, one's own mind or personal circumstances.

“WATER HAS MEMORY” by IKER RUIZ

In a conversation with Iker Ruiz, he told me about this project in the following words: “We were working on a project with Jon Cazenave and we proposed several themes, voted, and the theme of interior space came up. And I really like landscape photography, and at that time I was trying to understand a little bit why I liked that type of photography. So I decided to go to a mountain near Bilbao that I had never climbed, but which was my grandfather's favorite.”

He planned to modify the camera's interior with a mask and expose the entire roll of film during the ascent. He changed the mask's position at the summit and exposed the film again during the descent.

While working on the project and reflecting on it, he came to the conclusion that, for him, both the mountain and photography are internal spaces. Moments in which "only he participates", his body, his presence, and with which he reflects on his place in the world and, in this case, his family history.

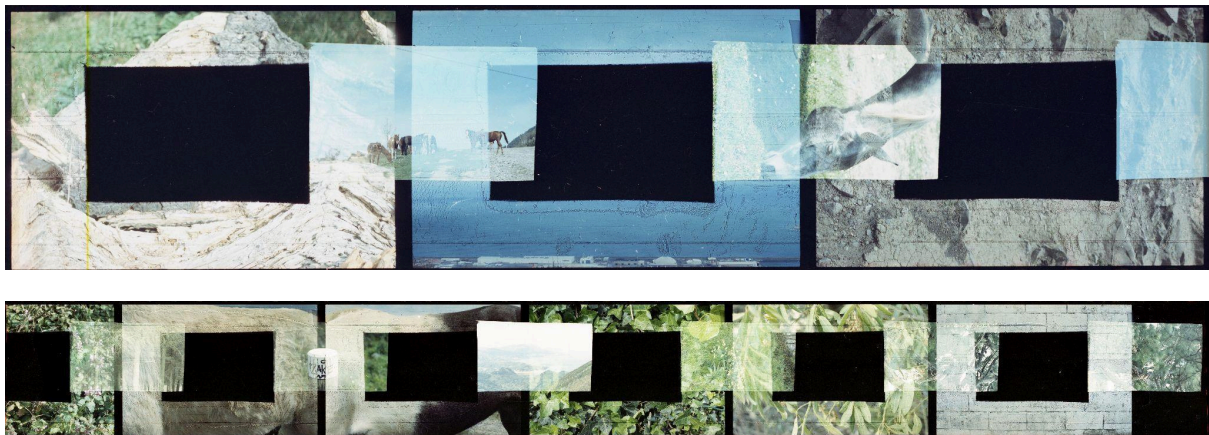


Figure 20: Iker Ruiz. Project extracted from *Water has memory*, joint publication made by the students of the CFC's Master of Author Photography during the 2020-21 academic year.

MIROSLAV TICHY

Miroslav Tichý (1926–2011) was born in Kyjov, Moravia, in the Czech Republic, where he produced the bulk of his work between 1960 and the mid-1980s. After World War II, he studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague. In the late 1950s, he abandoned painting and acquired the hoarding appearance that would become his trademark (Tichý Ocean Foundation, 2022). His appearance, along with his behavior, led to his confinement in numerous prisons and psychiatric institutions (von Kopp, 2007). It appears that the main reason for his abandonment of painting was the realization that all paintings are already painted and all drawings have already been drawn (Madrona, 2017).

He is credited with a phrase that perfectly encapsulates his vision: “To be famous, you have to do something, and do it worse than anyone else in the entire world.” Considered mentally ill by the authorities and confined to his native Kyjov, he wandered its streets and began taking photographs around 1960. With virtually no resources, he crafted his cameras from items found in the trash and developed the film in a rudimentary fashion at home. The camera bodies are constructed not only from camera parts but also from cardboard, wood, toilet paper rolls, all sealed with tar. He also made the lenses, reusing old glasses or pieces of Plexiglas that he polished by hand.

His photographs, taken with a compulsive attitude, were initially and mostly stolen from women in Kyjov in parks, swimming pools, or bus stops. The neighbors eventually accepted him as harmless.

He mounted the photographs obtained in this precarious way by gluing them onto dirty cardboard and, around them, he drew, or scratched and stained them. “There is a strange, innate beauty in her creations. Born from the supposed madness of a brain that seems chaotic, noisy, and convulsive, and yet is capable of transmitting truth and calm from imperfections and dirt, of communicating and expressing from a distant perspective.” (Madrona, 2017)

Miroslav Tichý was “discovered” around 1990 by Roman Buxbaum, who in 2005 created the Tichý Ocean Foundation to preserve his work, which has been exhibited on numerous occasions since then. For his part, Tichý did not envision his work anywhere other than his home, expressed aversion to seeing it in museums, and did not visit any of the exhibitions dedicated to him during his lifetime.

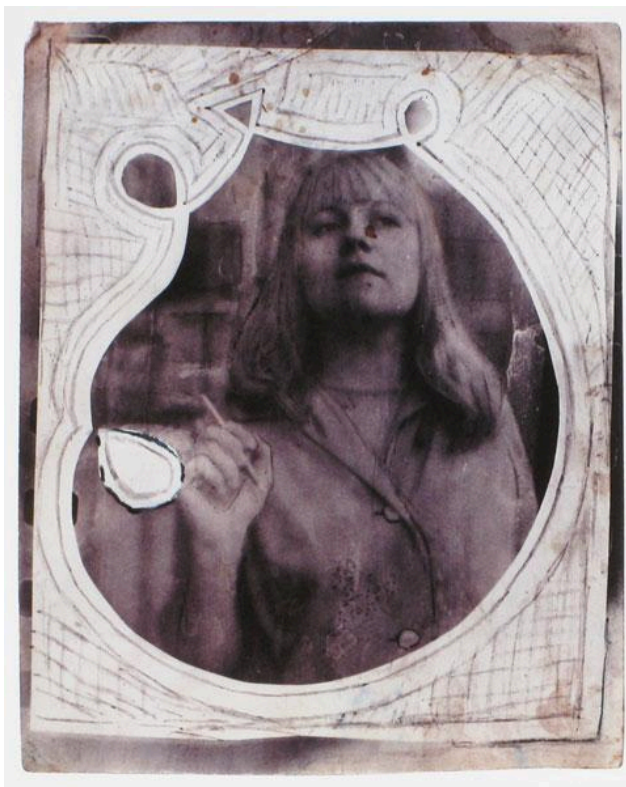


Figure 21: Miroslav Tichý. Untitled. 1950/1989. Published in the article dedicated by Madrona (2017)



Figure 22: Camera used by Miroslav Tichý. Tichý Ocean Foundation

“BLIND VISION” de KURT WESTON

Kurt Weston was a renowned Californian fashion photographer. In 1991, he was diagnosed with AIDS, a disease he survived, but which caused him to lose his sight, becoming blind in 1994, forcing him to abandon his work. Despite this, he continued his vocation and remains a prestigious photographer today (Oswald, 2022).

The artist himself explains his project with the following words:

I wanted to create photographs that represented my way of seeing things. That's how I created a series of images called "Blind Vision," which represents not only the loss of physical sight, but also the metaphysical transition of going blind. Many of the images are juxtaposed, with a lot of black space: there are obstructions that appear in some of the images, which in turn represent the obstructions I experienced in my own vision. One of the problems I have is called "swimmers," which are cobwebs that float in the eyes, obstructing vision. (Gómez, 2015)

He is completely blind in his left eye and only has peripheral vision in his right eye. He lacks central vision. He describes his vision as being “veiled with dirty Vaseline, out of focus, and with floating elements.”

He had to embark on a search for the right photographic tool to try to express his vision. After experimenting with different devices, he discovered that a scanner was the closest thing he could get to conveying what he saw. He also uses sheets of metallic paper, which give the illusion of broken glass.

When I realized I was going to be legally blind for the rest of my life, I started going to an institution called the Braille Institute, where people with some remaining sight are taught how to use methods to magnify images with technology, and that's what I use. I don't see the whole image on my screen at once; I have to enlarge it and then move it around to see each part. That takes me a long time. When I was doing my master's degree, I was always much slower because of my lack of sight. But that's also why I became more demanding of my work and the level of quality it has to have. It might take me three times longer, but I don't want my photography to stand out just because I'm blind, but because it's good work despite my blindness.. (Gómez, 2015)

The project *Blind Vision* It can be seen along with other works by the artist on his website (Weston, 2009).



Figures 23 and 24: Kurt Weston. “View Master” y “Cataract View”, *Blind Vision*.

“FABRICATED GLANCES. MYOPIA” by JOSÉ MANUEL MADRONA

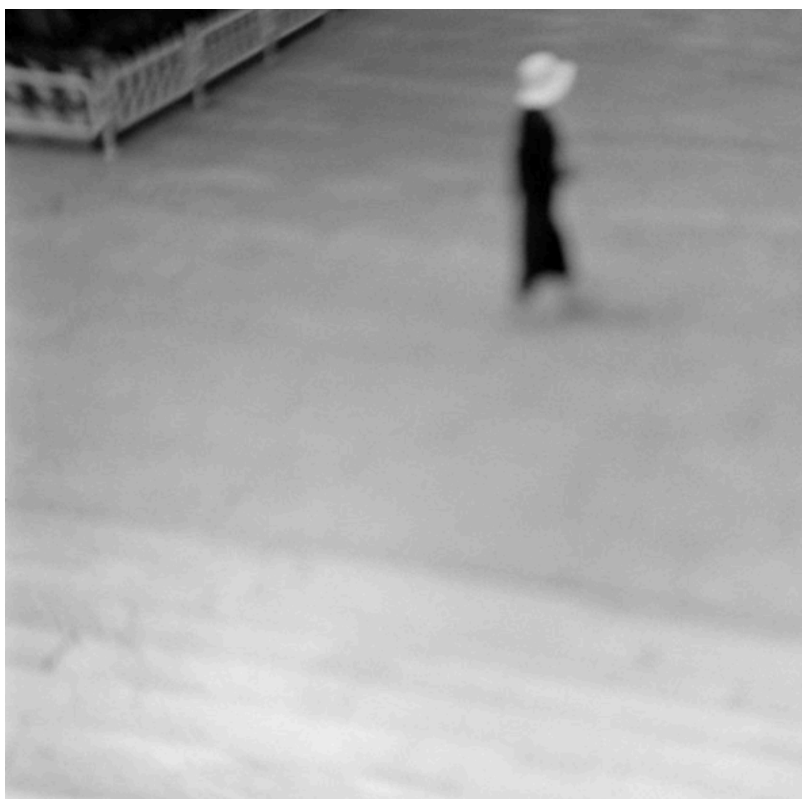
The photographic work of José Manuel Madrona, from Valencia, as he himself defines it, is oriented towards cameras with plastic lenses, imperfect and not always sharp lenses, as well as towards experimentation with film and alternative photographic processes. He also makes his own cameras and lenses with the aim of finding in imperfection a path of artistic expression combined with the simplicity of forms.

At 22, he bought his first camera, a camera with plastic lenses. "Once I learned what photography is and how a real camera works, I really liked the game it offered and the challenge of having a machine with which you can't do everything you want" (Miñana, 2022).

An expert in analog photography, with one of the most meticulous darkrooms in Spain, this photographer and friend of mine points out that analog techniques enhance the photographer's value because they are highly personal and hands-on. I want to highlight his project. *MANUFACTURED GAZE. MYOPIA* Not only is it one of my most admired works on a personal level, but it's also a work that highlights a physical reality where her body is at the heart of the matter. When her myopia began to worsen, she created this series of "myopic" photographs in which everything that happens can be deciphered through the blurriness, something that places the viewer in a very particular position, as the center of the creation shifts: it's no longer her myopia or the captured image, but rather the observer who discovers themselves in the face of this challenge.

A long-time member of the “Toy Camera” collective, he conceptually explores the use of limited, toy-like devices to narrate the limitations of the body and expression, as well as those of the photographic medium itself. This leads us to a key theme: nostalgia, the loss of memory, and aesthetics as a crucial concept; “beauty for its own sake,” the beauty of the process.





Figures 25 and 26: José Manuel Madrona. *Manufactured gazes. Myopia.*, s. f.

3.4. Legacy, beauty, disobedience

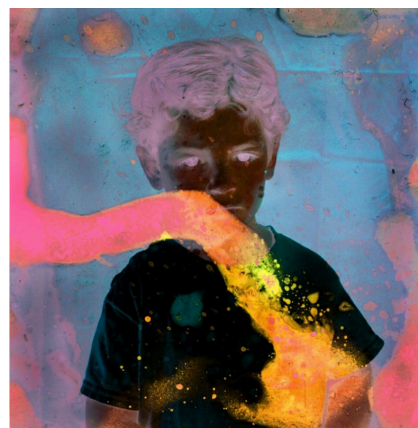
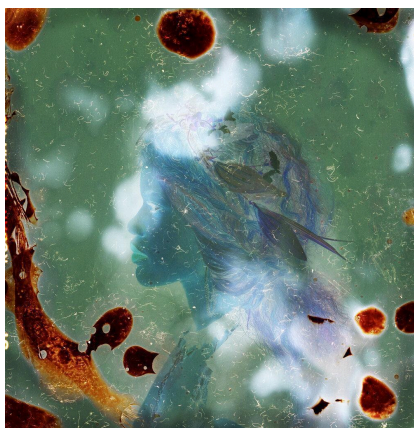
This section presents projects in which the apparatus is manipulated to evoke different issues: on the one hand, the awareness of the loss of photographic heritage with the arrival of digital photography; on the other, disobedience *per se* and for a purely aesthetic reason, as a position contrary to that established in the photographic cultural structure.

“FUGUE STATE” by ALINE SMITHSON

The destroyed portraits of *Fugue State* speak of the potential loss of tangible photography to future generations. “I watch my children, part of the most documented generation in history, creating thousands of images for their social media, but I am painfully aware that they have never made a photographic print and will probably not have any physical photographs to pass on to their grandchildren.” (Smithson, 2022 A). This loss of photography as an object, as something tangible to circulate across decades, reflects the fading of specific memories and identities, and the loss of cultural and family histories in ways we associate with preserving family.

Smithson explains that the photographs created for this series occupy an intermediate space between the future and the past, demonstrating the clash between images and materiality, where materiality, unfortunately, seems to be losing ground. For this project, after creating analog portraits of people in his life, he damaged the emulsion of his negatives, harming the film material with a variety of chemicals. He then reinterprets the image in the darkroom, where the potential for both restoration and erasure of memory is present. In effect, he is damaging his own photographic legacy as a way of drawing attention to this shift from the physical to the visual.

Over the years, he has collected and created hundreds of portraits. He has acquired some that are almost a century old, and these have led him to consider formal portraiture amidst the shifting sands of photography, the loss of photography as an object, and, most importantly, the loss of photographic legacies.



Figures 27 and 28: Aline Smithson. *Fuge State*.

He revisited his own project when he lost the scans saved on a corrupted hard drive. The recovery process only returned part of those scans, leaving the rest completely damaged.

Fugue State Revisited (Smithson, 2022 B) draws attention to the fact that today's digital archives may not retain their original state, or may not even exist, in the next century. The author highlights a troubling statement from the Getty Research Institute: "While you can still view family photographs printed more than 100 years ago, a CD with digital files from just 10 years ago could be unreadable due to the rapid changes in the software and devices we use to access digital content." This is something that José Manuel Madrona also questions regarding the use of digital media, not to engage in the unnecessary debate of whether one medium is "better" than another, but to address the issues of record-keeping and memory.

When we reflect on how we rely on technology to keep our images intact for future generations, the question arises: who will maintain our hard drives when we're gone?



Figures 29 and 30: Aline Smithson. *Fuge State Revisited*.

“TREATISE ON DISOBEDIENT PHOTOGRAPHY” by BLANCA VIÑAS

This project was born with the intention of proposing alternative ways of taking photographs without any desire to convince anyone (Viñas, 2020). It is a response to observations the author has heard over many years about her own work: "too aesthetic," "you lack content," "what are you trying to say?", "the effect shouldn't be the protagonist, it should be just one more element," "I see a formal rigidity in your photographic approach," or "you'll get to abstraction when you're older." These observations, in a way, called into question the experimental process as a value in itself.

Viñas presents his book as an anti-manual, "an inventory of analog, rebellious, free and unconventional processes that proposes photographic alternatives," and that proposes anarchic methodologies that question the limitations and norms that have been imposed within this discipline.

As she explains, the idea of publishing a book arose from an accumulation of images. She indicates that, although some images are more poetic and narrative and could tell a story, but she doesn't feel comfortable telling stories. She prefers that the images do the suggesting. (Rodríguez, 2021)

Blanca Viñas entered the world of photography with a portfolio and received a lot of criticism. People said her photographs didn't tell a story or have any concept behind them; that they were very aesthetically pleasing but lacked any narrative.

She explains that the central concept or guiding thread of her work, and what the book explores, is the photographic process itself. Talking about photography, manipulation, and breaking rules is what unites the images.

She was able to self-publish a book thanks to a Verkami crowdfunding campaign and a large community that had supported her for some time (Viñas, 2020). She uses different techniques of disobedience, from internal and external masks, double exposures, light leaks, or chemical interventions.



Figures 31 and 32: Blanca Viñas. Untitled photographs. *Treatise on disobedient photography*

3.5. Contemporary Obsession

In this latest project, there is an interesting shift in the use of the negative as an element that represents memory, the hidden, and finally, an important issue such as the contemporary dynamic obsessed with taking photographs, almost as a gesture inherent to existence, as an extension of the body and being; as a need to corroborate that we are alive, that we exist.

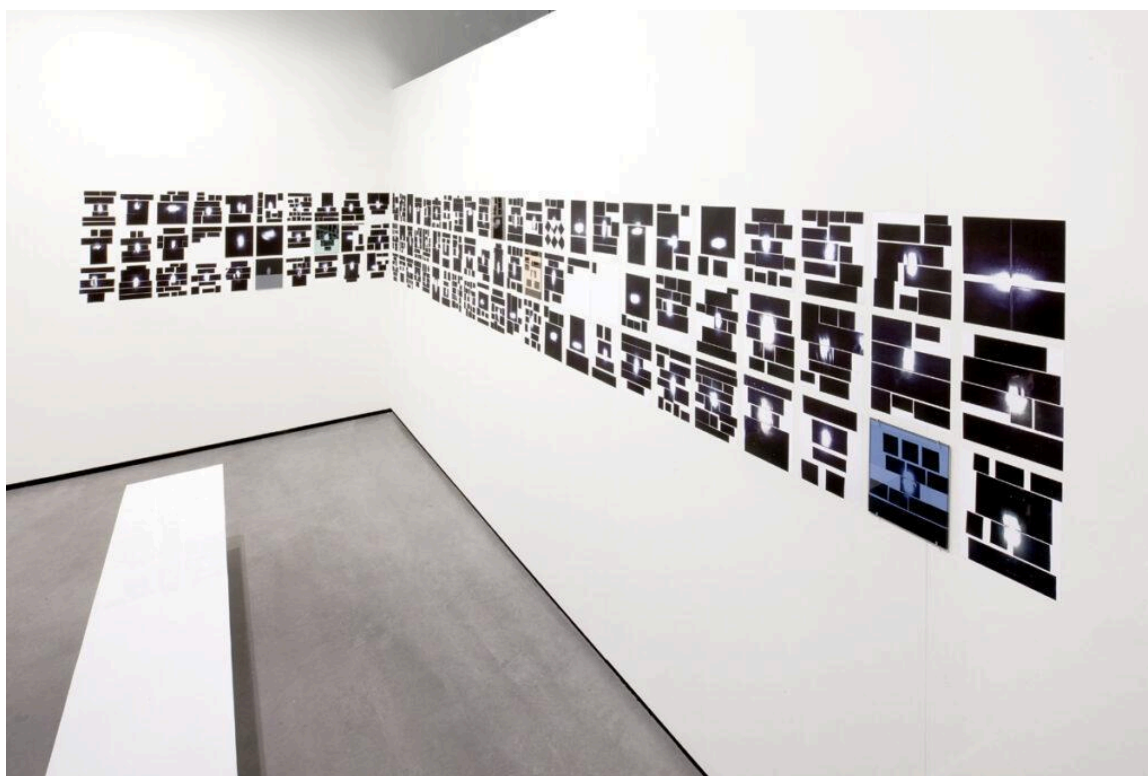
By emphasizing the need to find what was on those negatives and using a mobile phone with a flash to do so, Kruithof embodies, through his gesture and its outcome, an entire photographic reality that touches on different temporal points, from the negative to the mobile phone. From lost memory to the incessant need to record and accumulate images.

“SUBCONSCIOUS TRAVELING” BY ANOUK KRUIHOF

This installation of ninety-nine photographs and five pieces of glass is one of the works I've admired most in a long time. It consists of photographs taken directly from photographic negatives in an anonymous album, most likely documenting travels, as indicated by the handwritten names of cities and places. Kruithof found and bought this set of negatives at a flea market in Berlin.

Captivated by the seemingly useless negative clippings arranged in a book like an album, she re-photographed the pages using her iPhone with flash. The white circles from the reflecting light emphasize the search for information, that moment of being outside trying to peer into these remnants of erased memories.

By reinterpreting or reframing a traditional way of archiving images (the photo album, even without its photos) through a 21st-century device, Kruithof not only reflects on the changes in the photographic medium, but also addresses our contemporary obsession with taking one photo after another, the constant gesture of capturing images, no longer to document but as a way of “being alive” (González, 2018).



Figures 33 and 34: Anouk Kruithof. *Subconscious traveling*. Installation. 660 x 73 cm. 99 photographic stickers (18-23 cm) and 5 pieces of colored glass (18-23 cm). 2014

4. CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this work, the influence of technique on photography has been addressed, and examples have been provided regarding intervention, error, disobedience, and the role of the camera in all of this. The aim was to delve deeper into this topic and to identify and demonstrate tools and methods for creating a photographic syntax that takes into account the technical foundations of photography. Furthermore, the impact of these methods on the construction of narrative and experience is explored, enabling photography to fulfill certain purposes as an expressive, engaged, and, in many cases, aesthetic element. All of this is supported by (and demonstrates) the idea that there are no *erroneous* images. Failed images, those born from error, may not have a place within the hegemonic discourse, but (or perhaps precisely because of this) they are a bastion from which to traverse the margins.

This work has also considered the photographic technology as a factor of meaning in itself, a question absent in the main theories of photography until the eighties (Barthes, Bazin), at which time they were taken up again, proposing theories of a materialist nature (Flusser, Burgin, both taking up the ideas of Walter Benjamin from the thirties) or semiotic nature (Dubois, Schaeffer; in both cases they address the semiotic role of photographic technology implicit in it).

In this context, certain images challenge the primacy of the trace as testimony and work on the mimesis of photography. In other words, these images work because *They resemble what happened* there and not because of it *testimonies* (Rust, p. 126.)

The relationship between the apparatus and the sensible has also been addressed through authors who understand the human being as intrinsically linked to technology. The relationship of the apparatus to the senses was addressed by Déotte, for whom it is fundamental. Following Gilbert Simondon, philosopher of technology, he conceives humans as intrinsically technological beings. Flusser, in *Towards a philosophy of photography* (1990, p. 27) speaks of the human being as a servant of the machines by thousands of threads, some of them invisible. Wherever we go, we carry the machines with us or are carried by them; everything we do can be interpreted as if it were a function of a machine.

Flusser (2015, p. 31) also speaks of digital images as zero-dimensional, because they are mathematical patterns that abstract the world into numbers, but to each of them could correspond a gesture that translates into something concrete, that is, a modulation of the abstract to the material.

All the images already exist. It's up to us how to subvert them.

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