

I. Major Themes/Questions

- a. Photography as “art” (subjectivity) vs. “nature” (objectivity, mirror)
- b. What were the functions of early photography?
- c. The idea of collecting, and its uses in science and art changes
- d. New media are embedded in a greater economic, social, and political system. Not just a product, but a system of communication.
- e. Social changes supported the shift to mass communication, consumption and production.
- f. The social construction of technologies: We need to consider how changes in social structure are affecting how technologies are used or are created.
- g. Photography as mediator of the science or the artistic process; artist as mediator of science and illusion.
- h. How is the medium of photography seen today, in light of its origins in other media forms and technologies? How has this changed?

II. Daguerrotype Demo

- a. Video of Daguerrotyping
- b. The relationship between Niepce and Daguerre (Flichy)
- c. Eastman’s innovation: finding and fitting the invention to a domestic function (Flichy)
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/eastman/timeline/index.html>
- d. Overview of major inventors/inventions in early photography (see invention list below)

III. Flichy

- a. Daguerrotype was an artist who wanted to make an accurate, realistic copy.
- b. The inventors of photography were developing the process concurrently; they were not on a straight line of technological process
- c. There was a shift in life styles in the late 19th century, specifically in the separation between public and private.
- d. The home and family shifted in their value during this time
- e. There was an integration of entertainment technologies into the domestic sphere, and a growing mass market for these technologies.
- f. The collection of souvenirs and the integration of pieces of the outside world into the domestic space became prevalent
- g. The mass consumption and production of photography and other new communication technologies were related to these shifts

IV. Trachtenberg

- a. Strange vs. familiar aspects of photography
- b. The camera device and image are a result of socially constructed choices

- c. The photographic image was tied to an instantaneous moment; thus, it shows a relationship between then and now. People used photography to “make” history.
- d. The artist function shifted to one of making the unknown knowable; organizing the disordered world (Romantic artist → artist of Reason)
- e. Painting had already paved the way for seeing art as a way of organizing or making “the unknown knowable,” and seeing a relationship between the past and present.
- f. In stereography, people already were seeing images as illusions and entertainment
- g. There is a shift in seeing the photograph as itself having value

V. Morse

- a. The daguerreotype has caused a “revolution” in art and the role of the artist
- b. He argues that it also revolutionizes the way the public views art
- c. He characterizes this reproduction of nature as an exact painting

VI. Benjamin

- a. He looks at how mechanical reproduction affected art
- b. Mechanical reproduction is something new. There is no original piece of art, so it lacks authenticity.
- c. Mechanical reproduction brings out details that would go unnoticed. It puts into situations copies of an art object where it wouldn't normally be.
- d. It removes the “aura” of the object because it detaches the unique object from its tradition
- e. The mass movement brings in objects closer, so that instead of uniqueness we get multiplicity.
- f. With mechanical reproduction there is a shift from ritual to political value; the value of an art object shifts from “cult” value to “exhibition” value
- g. There is a change in the way the public views art and perceives images
- h. The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction must appeal to a mass audience.

VII. Ryan: "Hunting with the Camera"

-From 1850's onward in the Victorian-era West - camera was a tool for recording images of animals killed during hunts. Photography of the far-off places in the British Empire helped in the naming, cataloging, and incorporation of new animals, plants, and landscapes into British science

-Photography was not responsible for the coming together of colonialism, natural history, anthropology, sport, and collecting, but it further enabled these growing cultural tendencies, especially as technology improved

-Photography was included among other hunting trophies to show the Victorian-era man as independent, courageous, strong, and honest

-Cameras were explicitly compared to guns and expeditions had a military tenor to them, whether they were in the jungle or in the mountains

-Photography's evidentiary and realist purposes were highlighted - as scientific documentation of species, and as proof of the hunter's achievements. Photography did have illusion qualities, too - it could make individual dead creatures seem alive

-Photography was closely associated with taxidermy: "the representation of residues of animals to produce the illusion of live presence" From the 1850s, both grew in popularity. Taxidermy enabled photographers to compensate for slow cameras by providing still specimens they could pose in the wild

-Landscape photography was seen as a field sport and as an aesthetic endeavor. It was also another exercise of white man's power over new natural spaces.

-As taxidermy helped photographers until camera technologies improved, zoos helped photographers until cameras became more portable, exposure time was reduced, telephoto lenses were developed, and flashes were developed. As camera technology improved, photographers could accomplish more of their goals in the wild rather than in controlled situations. Portability improvements led to wide amateur use by the end of the nineteenth century

-As the photo-taking experience more paralleled the fast action of hunting, some advocates portrayed it as more sportsmanly than hunting. Photography became a tool of conservationists, who were recording flora and fauna that they feared was disappearing, while encouraging others to refrain from destruction in the name of science or sport. Many conservationists did continue to kill animals, especially when they got too close during a photo shoot.

-As distaste for the hunt grew, hunting expeditions transformed into photographic expeditions during the early 1900s. This was still domination, but shifted: "This shift is inescapably linked to the broader colonial transformation of Africa itself, from an era of exploration and conquest to one of settlement and administration."

-The logic of domination in East Africa extended from land, plants, and animals, to people. In that way, "civilized" Europeans distinguished themselves from all of "savage" Africa.

"Photographing the Natives"

-Nineteenth-century fascination with photography's rendering of the human body, during a time of colonial expansion, led to a European fascination with photographs of other, exotic bodies

-Photography was valued commercially for its picturesque qualities, and bodies of the Other were printed on postcards

-Photography was also an anthropological record of vanishing peoples, and a method of recording racial types

-Photographing the other became an integral part of the study of racial types - natives of different places were photographed in standardized poses, and later catalogued and examined for linkages to qualities such as laziness, criminality, efficiency, and intelligence

-Europeans looked into their own places too for evidence of the Other in the criminal and the insane. The practice was a distancing from these deviant elements of the familiar world at home: "darkest London." Recording of types mixed with the staging of artistic photos of London's poor

-Camera was rejected or feared by people in Africa and in China. Essentially, the power dynamic set up by the "capturing" photographer and the "captured" peoples who had no control over the distribution of their images was typical of the imbalance brought by imperialism

-This imbalance was eroticized, as in the postcards of the time depicting women of the Middle East in the private quarters of the harem. European white males with cameras made these bodies "available to a colonial gaze"

"Towards a Conclusion"

-Claims for photography's accuracy were misleading, as it "did not so much record the real as signify and construct it."

-Faith in naturalism and positivism even while some photographers played with illusion

-Colonial photography's apparent immediacy and veracity even as it changed the way time and space were portrayed

-Photography used to make exotic landscapes look familiar

-"Imaginative geographies" portrayed using a combination of photography with other media

Some Discussion questions:

1. How can we think about the shift from the public spectacle to domestic use of photography and the phonograph in "light" of the Marvin reading?

2. How might our understanding of historic moments be altered by photography, according to Trachtenberg?
3. How does the Peale painting relate to the idea of the artist as both scientist and magician? How does this relate to the Ryan vision of photography?
4. How do Trachtenberg's and Benjamin's reception of the image differ?
5. Can a photograph have its own aura? Detached from its referent, can it have its own value? What would Trachtenberg/Benjamin say?
6. What aspects of Benjamin's argument seem outdated or based on his social circumstances? How can we relate it to McLuhan's arguments?
7. If we look at Flichy, what was it about the culture of the late 19th century that enabled the camera to become a tool of mass communication? How do Crary's views support this? Put another way, would photography have become a product of mass consumption and communication without these social circumstances?
8. What is the relationship between Flichy's notion of "collecting" and Ryan's idea of "collecting"?
9. How has the role of artist as scientist and alchemist changed? Are artists still seen as mediators? How is this similar/different from our role as CMS students?
10. How do you compare Flichy, Trachtenberg, and Benjamin in terms of photography having a revolutionary effect, or being a product of an evolution?

Short List of Inventions/Inventors and Dates:

Heliography (literally sun writing) (1816): Niepce created the first "photograph," or first "permanent image by photochemical means."

<http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/exhibitions/permanent/wfp/5.html>

Daguerrotype (named after Daguerre) (1833): Painter Daguerre partnered with Niepce until Niepce's death in 1833. Daguerre appropriated his invention and "proposed a use for it which corresponded to an immediate market." This procedure uses silver-plated copper to fix the image in the camera obscura.

Positive Photography (1833): Hippolyte Bayard created a procedure of "positive photography directly onto paper."

Calotype (1839): William Fox Talbot develops positive proofs from paper. It was the first "practical photographic process on paper."

<http://photography.about.com/library/weekly/aa052002a.htm>

Kodak (launched 1888): Eastman's new photography device that was easy to handle, where amateurs and professionals could just click a button and they would do the processing.

http://www.americanheritage.com/xml/2003/5/2003_5_dept_business.xml

Important Names in Ryan:

Edwin Landseer

Frederick Courteney Selous

Agnes and Cecily Herbert
Rowland Ward
Hermann Ploucquet
Hereford Brooke George
Ernest Edwards
Edward North Buxton
Halford Mackinder
Carl Schillings
Arthur Radclyffe Dugmore
Carl Akeley
Francis Russell Nixon
Jones H. Lamprey
Trucanini
Maurice Vidal Portman
Harry Hamilton Johnston
John Thomson
Henry Mayhew
Francis Galton
Oscar Rejlander
John and Alice Harris