

Blurred Boundaries in Early Dutch Photography: Petit Genre and the Photogram



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Richard Polak and Henri Berssenbrugge (figs. 1 & 2)

For Tineke de Rooter

In memory

Abstract

At the beginning of the early twentieth century, various photographic societies were established such as the Brotherhood of the Linked Ring in England and de Nederlandse Club voor FotoKunst in the Netherlands, who profiled themselves as artists and promoted photography as a fine art. It is often argued that they solely produced images to evoke emotions or atmosphere, and that they exclusively looked back at painting styles to reach for the ultimate goal of including photography as a fine art. Moreover, the photographs are mainly described on the basis of art historical categories, techniques, or the biographies of the photographers. I argue that these perspectives neglect the crucial fact that the photographs are photographs, and that new perspectives are needed. Therefore, this research will take a more theoretical approach, by focussing on early Dutch photography from 1913-1927, the medium of photography, and the photo-theoretical concepts of light, straight and composed photography, and time. In this research, the focus will specifically be on two seemingly different photographs: a photograph which looks like a seventeenth-century genre painting by Richard Polak and a cameraless photogram by Henri Berssenbrugge. In this analysis, the attention will be aimed on the fact that these photographs are photographs, by moving to the heart of the medium, and eventually highlighting that within this core, the boundaries are blurred. By combining the earliest theories of photography, with more modern and contemporary arguments considering the medium, new perspectives on the two photographs will be provided, which gives revived attention to the neglected or forgotten early Dutch photography. By taking a different perspective, it is shown that the photographs are more than the reproduction of paintings, or more than just another painterly technique for creating figurative and abstract painting.

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Introduction

A photograph of a woman in a seventeenth-century dress, depicted directly next to a photogram consisting of circular and abstract shapes (figs. 1 & 2). At first sight, it seems to be odd to compare these two totally different images, of which the only similarities seem to lie within the usage of photography and the presence of black and white tones. However, this thesis will show that the two images contain more parallels than expected, especially when focusing on the medium of photography. Both photographs were created around the same time, which is between 1913 and 1927. At that moment, photographic movements were established, with as main goal to make photography a fine art. Before that, the medium of photography was mainly known to reproduce the so-called reality, for instance in family album photography, photographs of landscapes or for science. In addition, photography has often been described by using a framework based on the medium of painting. Photography has been associated with reality, the mechanical and neutrality. In early theories of photography, such as in texts written in the mid-nineteenth century by scientists and photographers John Herschel, Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre and Henry William Fox Talbot, this relationship with nature is emphasized. Fox Talbot published the first photographically illustrated book in 1844, which was titled *The Pencil of Nature*.¹ Fox Talbot, who saw himself as an amateur natural philosopher, notes that photography contains a proof-function, since according to him photography could be observed as the true law of nature.² He states that his book is the first effort to create pictures totally executed by the art of the photogenic drawing, “without any aid whatever from the artist’s pencil”.³ Photography is approached as “nature’s paper art”, a scientific art or a chemical art.⁴ Likewise, Joseph Nicéphore Niépce notes in 1839 that his invention, which was titled the heliograph, consists of an automatic reproduction, created by the action of light with gradations of tones from black to white.⁵ The idea of photography as an automatic reproduction has also been present in later theories of photography, such as in the mid-twentieth century by film theorist André Bazin, who notes that photography could be defined as a mechanical reproduction in which man plays no part.⁶

To challenge the lower status of photography compared to painting, at the end of the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century several associations were established, such as the Brotherhood of the Linked Ring in England in 1892, or the Photo-Secession in

¹ Talbot, 1844.

² Armstrong, 1998, 108.

³ Ibid., 112.

⁴ Ibid., 113-117.

⁵ Niepce, 1980 [1839], 5.

⁶ Bazin, 1960, 7.

America in 1902. In the Netherlands, various photographic societies were established by among others Henri Berssenbrugge and Adriaan Boer, such as De Nederlandsche Fotografen Kunstkring in 1902, and De Nederlandse Club voor FotoKunst in 1907. New techniques were used, new subjects were explored, and the photographs are often related to emotions, atmosphere and beauty.⁷ As art historian and curator Christian A. Peterson notes “at this time some advanced amateur photographers in the United States and Europe began making pictures that proved the artistic status of photography. Calling themselves pictorialists, they banded together in camera clubs, presented exhibitions they called salons, and created photographic images that drew inspiration from traditional visual arts.”⁸ The word amateur refers in this case to photographers who do not own a photo studio, and who do not make portraits for living, but who experiment with photography as an art, which was often considered to be a hobby. The photographic movements were supporting photography as a fine art, and moved away from the idea that photography could only be defined as an indexical art.⁹ The Dutch photo societies shared this international desire of making photography a fine art. They regularly contributed to international exhibitions, and shared their opinions in international magazines such as *The Amateur Photographer*.¹⁰ Important members of these societies were among others Henri Berssenbrugge, Adriaan Boer, Bernard Eilers, Johan Huijsen, Richard Polak and Berend Zweers. The Dutch associations were to a large extent similar to well-known groups such as The Linked Ring, but could be defined as more fragmented, and were established a little bit later. In the Netherlands, many photographers were a member of more than one association.¹¹ A large part of the collection of photographs made by these Dutch photographers is now part of the Leiden University photography collection.¹²

Pictorial photography has been defined in several ways, in which the emphasis has mainly been put on beauty and emotions. Some art historians define pictorialism in the sense of the emotions of the viewer, while others define it related to the emotions of the photographer. Art historian Robert Doty, for instance, defines pictorial photography as “photographs which were intended to be beautiful, or tell a story, and which appealed directly

⁷ Considering Dutch photography in the early twentieth century, the relationship between the photographs and atmosphere was suggested by Leijerzapf, 2007 and Van den Heuvel, 2010.

⁸ Peterson, 1997, 13.

⁹ For an extensive discussion about the indexicality of photography see Elkins, 2006.

¹⁰ Leijerzapf, 2001, 7.

¹¹ For more biographical information about the various photo associations in the Netherlands see Leijerzapf, 1999 and De Ruiter, 1996.

¹² This is the result of the effort by the various photographic associations to establish a museum solely for photography in the early twentieth century, which did not succeed at that time. After the Second World War, the early collection of photographs was acquired by the Prentenkabinet, which has become part of the Special Collections of the Leiden University Libraries. For more information about the Leiden photography collection see Leijerzapf, 1989.

to the emotions of the viewer".¹³ Art historian Alison Nordström notes that the pictorialist photographers considered personal expression as the purpose of photography, instead of the creation of a literal depiction of the world.¹⁴ This statement is more related to the perspective of the photographer, and a distinction seems to be made between photography as a reproduction of reality, or photography as a fine art. It seems that atmosphere, traditional art and beauty are the key concepts when thinking and writing about early twentieth-century photography. The already existing research into the photo associations often solely approaches the photographs as a photographic style or an expression which evokes emotions, and focuses less on the theoretical debates of photography. Sometimes a technical approach is taken, in which the photographs seem to be defined mainly as a photographic technique, and in which the technological process is highlighted. In addition, some research focuses on the historical context and the biographical information of the photographers, instead of on the photographs itself. It seems that new perspectives in the field of pictorialist photography and of the various photo associations could still be uncovered. Hence, new approaches need to be used and new insights need to be given. This thesis will investigate the still neglected and blurred field of early twentieth-century photography, by focusing on the photographs created in the Netherlands in the period of the photo associations between 1913 and 1927.

The photographs made by these Dutch photographers show interesting positions and debates related to theories of photography. It is known that the Dutch photographers created images which could be compared to various painting styles or movements, such as the genre painting in the seventeenth century, impressionism or abstract painting.¹⁵ Until now, the Dutch photographs have mainly been related to these painterly styles, and the research has been descriptive. My aim is therefore to research the Dutch photographs from a new perspective and to uncover these gaps. I wish to take the approach which emphasizes the fact that the photographs are photographs. The photographs are not paintings, not sculptures, but they are photographs, and what does this mean? The fact that the medium of photography is present, is generally too often ignored when researching photography from the early twentieth century. In this thesis, I will focus on three specific concepts which are discussed in twentieth-century debates concerning photography, which are light, straight and composed photography, and time, to eventually give a more in-depth analysis of the Dutch photographs in the early twentieth century.

On the level of representation, the Dutch photographs contain more variety on more

¹³ Doty, 1960, 11.

¹⁴ Nordström, 2008, 41.

¹⁵ The relationship between seventeenth-century paintings and the Dutch pictorialist photographs has been introduced by Leijerzapf, 2007 and Van den Heuvel, 2010.

levels than has been thought. In the collection of Leiden University some early twentieth-century photographs are present, which could normally be associated with the so-called new photography movement, abstract art and modernism. One could think of the photograms created by Henri Berssenbrugge, which show similarities to the photograms by László Moholy-Nagy and Man Ray (figs. 14 & 15).¹⁶ Some photographs of forests, landscapes or canals do not contain the common ideas of the pictorialist atmosphere, but consist of hard lines and surfaces. Likewise, photographs were made of factories, new consumption objects and the speedy urban life. Lastly, these various ways of photographing did not evolve in a chronological order, but were created simultaneously by the same photographers at the same time. This would mean that the new photography movements and experiments already took place earlier than has been argued until now, and that the pictorialism movement has been broader than thought before. This suggests that the boundaries are less clear than has been described in earlier writings. There does not seem to be a hard distinction between the Dutch pictorial photographers and the Dutch modernist photographers. Hence, pictorialism could be seen as one part of the Dutch photography associations, but the associations are not solely focussing on pictorialism. The boundaries between traditional and modern, emotion or objectivity, pictorialism and new photography are more blurred than has been thought.

To narrow down my research, I have chosen to focus on two photographs of two photographers in this thesis, who seem to create very different images. Namely, a photograph which simulates a seventeenth-century genre painting created by Richard Polak (1870-1956) (fig. 1) and an abstract photogram created by Henri Berssenbrugge (1873-1959) (fig. 2). I have chosen these two photographs specifically, because the two images seem to be very different, although they both contain a relationship with painting, since the photograph by Polak looks like a genre painting from the seventeenth century, and the photogram by Berssenbrugge contains similarities with abstract modernist paintings (figs. 18 & 19). In addition, the photographs both differ from the idea of photography as a neutral and mechanical medium, such as Fox Talbot argued.

Polak is a Dutch photographer, who is mainly famous for his photographs which look like genre paintings of the Dutch seventeenth century. Polak made these photographs from 1913 till 1915 in a studio in Rotterdam, which he transformed into a seventeenth century chamber. Polak published the photographs in the book *Photographs from Life in Old Dutch Costume* in 1923.¹⁷ Polak created many genre photographs, such as a photograph of a

¹⁶ Henri Berssenbrugge was invited by designer and photographer Piet Zwart to join the Film und Foto exhibition in 1929: one of the most important early exhibitions considering modernist photography. For more biographical information considering Berssenbrugge see Leijerzapf, 2001.

¹⁷ Grootes, 1991.

woman with a jewellery box, a photograph of two people playing music and a photograph of a woman sitting in a chair (figs. 3, 4 & 5). Next to genre photographs, Polak made many photographs of Italian landscapes. Other Dutch photographers created these genre photographs as well in the same period, such as Berssenbrugge and Adriaan Boer (figs. 6 & 7). The difference between the genre photographs by Polak, Berssenbrugge and Boer is that Polak was the only Dutch photographer who constructed a seventeenth-century living room in his studio, by collecting furniture, costumes and attributes. In addition, Polak was the only photographer who created many of these photographs for a longer period, and published a book of the genre series. Therefore, in this thesis, the focus will be on the genre photograph created by Polak. Polak is generally defined as a pictorialist photographer.¹⁸

Berssenbrugge is probably the most well-known photographer of all the Dutch photo associations. He has photographed many different topics, subjects and styles, such as photographs of farmers, pictorialist landscapes, cityscapes or portraits of artists (figs. 8 & 9). Berssenbrugge himself is defined as a pictorialist photographer, but some of his photographic experiments, such as the photogram, are not considered to be pictorialism.¹⁹ Berssenbrugge created various series of photograms in the 1920s, of which some series could be defined as abstract, while in other photographs the objects are still recognizable (figs. 10, 11 & 12). Since the abstract photograms created by Berssenbrugge could be related more to abstract painting and modernism, the focus will be on that series in this thesis. Berssenbrugge was one of the first Dutch photographers who created the photograms, inspired by Moholy-Nagy and El Lissitzky. Another Dutch photographer who created these photograms was for instance Piet Zwart, but he started experimenting later than Berssenbrugge, at the end of the 1920s (fig. 13).

The photographs by Polak and Berssenbrugge make use of light in a specific way, both images could be related to the idea of straight as well as composed photography, and both images could be related to photographic concepts of time and memory. These various concepts related to theories of photography will be the central topic in this thesis. The question in this thesis will therefore be how the two photographs could be related to these concepts, and in what way they differ from the idea of photography as just a mechanical medium which is related to reality. Hence, the research question of this thesis will be: what is the relationship between the early Dutch photographs by Berssenbrugge and Polak and some photo-theoretical concepts related to light, straight as well as composed photography, and time, and in what way do the photographs blur the boundaries of these concepts? This will present a new perspective on the early Dutch photography, which does not solely focus

¹⁸ Grootes, 1991.

¹⁹ Leijerzapf, 2001.

on style and subjects, but which includes the theory of photography from both the late nineteenth century, early twentieth century and more contemporary theories, to show that the photographs are more interesting than when solely observed in terms of the similarity with painting or the presence of emotions.

To conduct my research, I started with close reading the vintage photographic prints created by photographers of the Dutch associations, which are present in the collection of Leiden University. Moreover, my research consisted of literary research. I executed a more expanded literary research into the themes of photo-secession, photography in the early twentieth-century and various well-known photographers, such as Fox Talbot or Edward Steichen. This literary research eventually led to a more theoretical literary research, because I noticed the gap of theory in the field of early twentieth-century photography. This research focused on theories and writings of photography related to themes such as light and time. I both made use of early theories on photography, writings from the twentieth century and more contemporary theories.

The first chapter will deal with the concept of light, and discusses how the two photographs by Polak and Berssenbrugge could be related to light, as well as the idea of a mirror and window in photography. The chapter will argue that the photographs make use of light in a direct and constructed way, or in a first and secondary way. The images make use of light on various levels, which will show the blurred aspects of the medium of photography. In this chapter, theories are used which focus on the relationship between light and photography, in which the focus is mainly on theories by William Henry Fox Talbot, Henry Peach Robinson, László Moholy-Nagy and Victor Burgin. In addition, theories are used that concentrate on the window and mirror in photography, in which the focus is mainly on theories by John Szarkowski, David Bolton and Richard Grusin.

The second chapter will focus on the seemingly oppositional concepts of straight and composed photography, contrasting the idea of photography as a fact, or a pencil of nature, and photography as a manipulation or a remake. The chapter will show that both photographs make use of straight and composed elements in various ways, and that the categories are not as strict as often has been suggested. Important theorists considering straight and composed photography are Henry Peach Robinson, Victor Burgin and David Green. In addition, the focus will be on theories of the expanded medium by Rosalind Krauss and John Berger, and the concept of the simulacrum by Jean Baudrillard.

Lastly, the third chapter will draw the attention to the concepts of time and memory in photography. This chapter will show that the photographs or the photographic referents do not contain a past, nor contain a future, since the photographs only contain a pre-photographic stage as a past. In this chapter, important theorists are Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag, Jean Baudrillard and Geoffrey Batchen. Together these three chapters eventually

will lead to a conclusion considering the two photographs and the blurred boundaries of the discussed photographic concepts. By moving back to the heart of the medium of photography, it becomes clear that inside this core, there is more variety present than expected.

1. The Sun Pictures: Direct and Constructed Light in Photography

It is hard to think of a photograph or photography in general, without thinking about light or of the presence of light. In this chapter, the photograph by Richard Polak which looks like a seventeenth-century genre painting, and the abstract photogram by Henri Berssenbrugge, will be related to the concept of light. When observing these particular photographs, one immediately seems to become aware of the presence of light, or at least of different tone scales between dark and light, or black and white. The photograph by Polak shows very light or white areas, as well as areas which are considered to be dark or black. The photogram by Berssenbrugge likewise shows these contrasts. Moreover, the photograph by Polak contains a window, which reminds the viewer of the presence of the sun or daylight. Hence, it is clear that there is a basic relationship with light present in the observed photographs. Light seems to be one of the fundamentals of photography. Of course, one could think of some exceptions, in which light is not used to create an image – such as the x-ray photograph – however, in most cases some form of light is required to create a photograph. As is known, the word photography derives from the Greek words for light and drawing, which literally means drawing with light or writing with light.²⁰ Other photographic techniques likewise refer to this important presence of light, such as the heliograph, which refers to the sun, or the photogenic drawing, invented by photography pioneer William Henry Fox Talbot in 1834. In analogue techniques, light is needed to give a different tone to silver salts: without light, there would be no photograph.²¹ Fox Talbot emphasizes the importance and power of light, by stating that “now light, where it exists, can exert an action, and, in certain circumstances, does exert one sufficient to cause changes in material bodies.”²² This shows that according to him the presence of light is even so powerful, that it can change the material, and create an image itself.

Some theories of photography from the first part of the twentieth century likewise place the emphasis on the relationship with light. As László Moholy-Nagy notes in 1927 “this century belongs to light. Photography is the first means of giving tangible shape to light, though in a transposed and – perhaps just for that reason – almost abstract form.”²³ Hence, it seems that light is approached as something which is intangible, and that photography is a

²⁰ φωτός (phōtos), which means light and γραφή (graphé), which means drawing.

²¹ Concerning digital photography, light is still needed to create the photograph, although the silver salts are not literally transformed into different tone scales anymore. Various tones of light are transformed into digital codes and pixels, which would not be possible without the presence of light. According to William J. Mitchell “a photograph is an analogue representation of the differentiation of space in a scene: it varies continuously, both spatially and tonally”. Hence, tonal differentiations are needed to create the photographic image. See Mitchell, 1992, 4-5.

²² Talbot, 1980 [1844-46], 29.

²³ Moholy-Nagy, 1989 [1927], 85.

means to make this tangible; to show that the light is really there, and to keep it as it was at that moment. Moreover, Moholy-Nagy underlines the importance of light, by stating that the century belongs to light: it is the first century in which light has played a crucial role.²⁴

In this chapter the central question is how the photographs by Polak and Berssenbrugge are related to the fundamental concept of light in photography. Moreover, the question is how these relationships differ from each other, and how they both differ from the traditional idea of photography as a pencil of nature and a mechanical medium. Finally, the question is how this relationship with light could be related to the idea of the mirror and the window in photography. This, because the mirror and the window also always seem to contain a connection with light, as well as with reflections and translucency.

The image by Berssenbrugge is considered to be a photogram, which is a certain form of photography created without making use of a camera, by placing the objects directly onto the light sensitive material and exposing them to light. The photogram could be defined as cameraless photography. The technique became especially well-known when artists such as Moholy-Nagy and Man Ray started creating these images, but the photograms were already known before that time as the first forms of photography, such as the prints of various plants included in *The Pencil of Nature* by Fox Talbot or the cyanotype by for instance photographer Anna Atkins (figs. 16 & 17).²⁵ The areas on the paper which receive no light at all remain white, and the areas which receive a lot of light turn black. This could be defined as a negative image, but it is also considered to be the positive image. On the basis of the transparency of the items placed on the material, various tones could be created.

Considering Berssenbrugge's photogram, there seems to be a direct and literal relationship with light on three different levels (fig. 2). Firstly, his photogram is the result of the presence of light rays, without the intervention of a camera or other materials which guide the light. Secondly, a direct way of printing is used and thirdly, the objects literally touch the light sensitive paper. Generally, the photogram could be defined as a direct representation of light. Moholy-Nagy describes the photogram as "the fixing of spatial rays in black-white-grey, in their immaterial, non-pigmentary effect".²⁶ Interestingly, the photogram is hence associated with a certain immateriality, and defined as a medium which can fix a certain type of light into the paper. The immaterial aspect could derive from the idea that no camera is used to photograph the images: there is no intermediation of lenses, a black box or a glass negative. The light falls directly onto the light sensitive material, without any intervention of other

²⁴ One could also think of electric light, cinema, projections, advertisements and passages.

²⁵ Talbot, 1844. A cyanotype produces a typical cyan-blue print, and was used by engineers as a blueprint, or by various artists. Man-Ray entitles his own photograms 'rayograms'.

²⁶ Moholy-Nagy, 1989 [1927], 90.

materials. Artist and writer Victor Burgin notes in 1989 that “obviously, photography only takes place where there is light and a substance which reflects light”, and he states that “a photo-sensitive emulsion necessarily registers the distribution of light to which it is exposed”.²⁷ In the case of the photogram by Berssenbrugge, one could not speak of something which reflects light, because there is only a process of absorbing light present, instead of a process of reflecting light. Hence, there are no reflections, but only absorptions present. Moholy-Nagy argues in 1922 that until that moment, the camera was only used in a secondary sense by capturing certain objects as they reflect or absorb the light.²⁸ In contrast, the photogram could be defined as a technique which uses photography in a first sense, by capturing the light directly onto the light sensitive material. This is thus a direct way of making photographs, which comes close to the etymology of the word photography itself. This direct way of making photographs clearly differs from the idea of photography as a mechanical process, which focuses on taking photographs in the secondary sense as Moholy-Nagy and Burgin noted. The photogram made by Berssenbrugge is thus a first and direct sense of photography, in which the light is captured instantaneously. Although the photogram itself is still a material form, namely a light sensitive paper, a certain form of immateriality is present, since there are no secondary reflections, but only absorptions present.

The idea of immateriality seems to be increased in the photogram created by Berssenbrugge, because there are no immediately recognizable objects represented in his image. For the reason that there are no connections to be made with certain reflections of objects, the photogram by Berssenbrugge seems to represent the light rays only. In general, it is evident which objects are represented on a photogram, such as a plant, a flower, objects such as a pair of scissors, or even a hand. This becomes clear when observing the photograms created by Man Ray and Moholy-Nagy, in which one could distinguish drawing pins, a spring or a hand (figs. 14 & 15). Berssenbrugge himself also created some photograms in which the objects are still recognizable (fig. 12). However, this particular photogram created by Berssenbrugge which is part of a series, does not show these recognizable objects, but shows a composition of various lines and shapes. These shapes probably derive from a glass object such as a wine glass or a bottle, just as in Berssenbrugge’s other photograms. In this sense, his photogram could be defined as an atypical photogram, which contains more relationships with an abstract painting than the regular photogram. This becomes clear when comparing the photogram by Berssenbrugge to an abstract painting by artist Robert Delaunay, created in 1930, in which the same kind of circles are visible (figs. 18 & 19). Both Berssenbrugge’s photogram and the abstract painting

²⁷ Burgin, 1989, 41 & 61.

²⁸ Moholy-Nagy, 1989 [1922], 81.

by Delaunay are generally received more as an object, than as a representation. Art historian, art critic and photographer Franz Roh notes concerning the photogram that “by exposing them a long or short time, holding them close or far, letting sharp or subdued artificial light shine upon them, schemes of luminosity are obtained that so change the colour, outline and moulding of objects as to make them lose body and appear but a lustrous strange world and abstraction”.²⁹ Hence, this could mean that a certain form of abstraction is created, which is not present in the conventional photograph, and which is even increased in the photograms by Berssenbrugge because of the absence of recognizable figures. Interestingly, when thinking about the relationship between the glass and light sensitive paper, the photogram by Berssenbrugge on the other hand comes close to the idea of a conventional camera with a glass lens, since Berssenbrugge literally uses glasses on light sensitive paper. The light falls through these glasses on the light sensitive paper as if it were a photographic lens. The first relationship with light and the photogram by Berssenbrugge is thus characterised by the absence of a camera and the absence of recognizable figures, although the combination of glass and light sensitive paper comes close to a conventional photo camera again.

Next to a direct way of photographing, the photogram could be defined as a direct way of printing unique pictures, because there is no transfer present from a negative image to a positive image in the printing process. As is known, light in a regular photograph is generally firstly reflected from the objects through the camera lens into the light sensitive film, and afterwards this negative film needs to be transformed into a positive image by using a new source of light. Concerning an usual photograph, the printing process contains various steps of using light. In a photogram, the light directly creates the final image, without any intervention in the printing process. There is no difference between negative and positive images, since the light sensitive paper is already the final photograph. Moreover, the objects which were placed on the photographic paper, were placed directly onto the light sensitive paper. Fox Talbot emphasizes this element of the photogram, by noting that the cameraless photograph stands closer to its origin than a photograph created with a camera. According to Fox Talbot, the photogram comes in direct contact with the object, while the regular camera intervenes between the object and its photographic trace. Moreover, he notes that the photogram shows the natural size of the object, because there is no distance between the object and its trace.³⁰ This means that there was a strong and direct contact between the objects and the paper, and they were literally touching each other. The photogram even shows the object in the same size as it has appeared on the paper, because it cannot be

²⁹ Roh, 1989 [1930], 159.

³⁰ Armstrong, 1998, 158.

enlarged or reduced in size. This direct relationship would not be possible when photographing with a regular camera, because there is always a certain distance from the photographed object.

It becomes clear that the presence of light plays a crucial role in Berssenbrugge's photogram. It could be related to the concept of light on three levels, which all contain a direct relationship with light: the direct absorption, the direct printing process, and the direct touching contact. The photogram by Berssenbrugge mainly differs from the idea of photography as a mechanical device, because the light is used to directly create the image, instead of in a secondary sense. There is no interference by the camera or other objects, and there are no secondary reflections or interventions present. This direct contact seems to suggest that the photogram is indeed a sun picture, or created by the pencil of nature as a neutral and direct image. However, light is also part of the artistic process of creating the photogram. Berssenbrugge almost seems to paint his photograms, by using light instead of a brush and paint, and by using a light sensitive paper instead of canvas. This means that the usage of light in the photogram is strongly connected to the idea of the pencil of nature, but that the artist is present as well. Moreover, the glass which is used on the light sensitive paper could be related to a photographic lens, which is closer to the photo camera, and the notion of photography as mechanical device.

By discussing one of the most crucial elements in the medium of photography, it becomes clear that in Berssenbrugge's photogram, light has not only been used in the sense of the creation of atmosphere and emotions, or photography as a mechanical device. Light is namely essential for the creation of the photogram itself. Concerning the photogram, the usage of light differs from the conventional ideas about photography and light, related to the mechanical aspects, in which photographs are created with a camera. In addition, Berssenbrugge's photogram differs from photography as a medium which is solely related to the pencil of nature. The photogram is direct, but also related to the photographic glass lens, and the photogram is abstract, but when the objects are recognizable it moves more to the direction of the pencil of nature. The relationship between the photogram by Berssenbrugge and light shows that within the essence of the medium of photography, variety is present. Berssenbrugge's photogram is on the one hand a representation of abstract circular shapes, and on the other hand a creation of direct light and a direct touching contact. Therefore, this photogram is not solely related to reproducing the medium of painting, but likewise contains experiments related to the basis of the medium of photography itself.

How, then, could the photograph by Richard Polak be related to light? Polak's photograph does not seem to contain the literal and direct relationship with light (fig. 1), as just argued

considering the photograms by Berssenbrugge. The photograph by Polak seems to be the opposite of the various arguments why the photogram by Berssenbrugge could be defined as a direct way of photographing. Firstly, the photograph is created by making use of a camera, and hence consists of the secondary relationship with light that Moholy-Nagy wrote about, in which the camera captures the light before it falls on the light sensitive material.³¹ The light thus does not fall directly onto the light sensitive material, but is firstly captured by the camera and lenses, and afterwards projected onto the negative glass plate. The photograph is printed from the negative image, and is transformed into a positive image by using a new light source. However, would this mean that the photograph by Polak does not focus on how the medium of photography deals with light, and the blurred boundaries within this essence of photography? Just as in the photogram by Berssenbrugge, light does seem to play a crucial role in Polak's pictures, and it immediately draws the attention of the viewer.

Polak's photograph contains similarities with the paintings from the Dutch seventeenth century, such as with the paintings by the famous painters Johannes Vermeer or Rembrandt van Rijn (figs. 21-25). On the level of depictions, the people in his photographs wear the same kind of clothes, and the scenery also tries to resemble seventeenth-century houses. Polak built his own studio, bought various seventeenth-century furnishings, and used old costumes.³² But this is not the only reason why the photograph is similar to the genre paintings from the seventeenth century. Moreover, chiaroscuro is present in Polak's image. This is an Italian term which was originally applied as a term for tonality in paintings in the early sixteenth century. It literally means light and dark, and is defined as the interplay of light and shadows, or dark and light parts in a painting.³³ The word chiaroscuro has elements in common with the word photography, because they both refer to the creation of an image with light, although the word chiaroscuro refers to the interplay between light and dark parts, or shadows. This relationship with shadows is present in photography as well as in painting. Fox Talbot initially named his first photographic images sciagraphs, which means drawings of shadows.³⁴ In a letter that was sent by Laura Mudy to Fox Talbot in 1834, she writes "thank you very much for sending me such beautiful shadows".³⁵ This means that she referred to the photographs by using the term shadows, which seems to be oppositional to light. Instead of creating the photograph with light, this suggests that the photograph was created with shadows, or dark tones. This play of shadows is likewise present in chiaroscuro paintings. A pioneer of chiaroscuro was Leonardo da Vinci, and one of the most influential

³¹ Moholy-Nagy, 1989 [1922], 81.

³² Grootes, 1991.

³³ Chiaroscuro derives from the Italian chiaro, which means bright or clear, and the Italian scuro, which means dark or obscure.

³⁴ Siegel, 2017, 21.

³⁵ Mundy, 2017 [1834], 22.

painters was Caravaggio. In the chiaroscuro paintings, the contrast between light and dark parts are accentuated, and this effect is generally exaggerated. This becomes clear when observing a well-known painting by Caravaggio, painted in 1601, titled *The Supper at Emmaus* (fig. 24). The painting is a depiction of Christ and two apostles in the town of Emmaus. The painting does not depict daylight, the background is extremely dark, the middle tones are intentionally lacking and the depicted figures are in the spotlight. Behind Christ, large and dark shadows become visible on the wall, because of the presence of the spotlight. The light is often centered on one person or a group of people, which is in this case Christ and the apostles. In addition, it regularly contains a constructed light source, and sometimes various light sources are used in the same painting.

Just as in painting, in photography chiaroscuro has played an important role. Already the first theorists of photography frequently referred to chiaroscuro and especially to the Dutch painter Rembrandt van Rijn. Photographer Henry Peach Robinson, for instance, notes that chiaroscuro should be used to divide spaces preventing confusion and perplexity, and to support the expression and the sentiment of the picture.³⁶ He even suggests that by bringing “the darkest mass of the picture (...) against the lightest part of the sky, the value of each is enhanced, and a delicate sense of atmosphere and space is gained that would be difficult to produce by any other device”.³⁷ With this, Peach Robinson seems to refer to the pictorialist photography by for instance *The Linked Ring*, in which atmosphere and emotion were considered to be crucial. In addition, he notes that it is difficult to produce this sense of space with another device, which is interesting because chiaroscuro was often solely related to painting. Art critic Elizabeth Eastlake notes in 1857 that photography always fails in the rendering of true chiaroscuro or the true imitation of light and dark, because “nature, we must remember, is not made up only of actual lights and shadows, besides these more elementary masses, she possesses innumerable reflected lights and half-tones”.³⁸ This means that according to her nature does not contain chiaroscuro, because there are many half-tones and other elements that differ from the strong contrasts between dark and light tones. Since photography is strongly related to nature, it will never be able to contain chiaroscuro as well.

The photograph by Polak contains a relationship with chiaroscuro on several levels, which is both connected to chiaroscuro in painting and photography. Polak firstly makes use of the spotlight effect exploited by Caravaggio and Rembrandt, secondly the black and white qualities of the photograph come close to the definition of the term chiaroscuro, and lastly the light is constructed before making the photograph. At first sight, large contrasts between the light and the dark parts are present in the photograph, and the middle tones seem to be

³⁶ Robinson, 1973 [1897], 27.

³⁷ Ibid., 91-92.

³⁸ Eastlake, 1980 [1857], 57.

missing. Polak's photograph, however, also displays resemblances with the soft light paintings created by Johannes Vermeer. When observing a painting by Vermeer, such as *Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window* painted between 1657 and 1659, it becomes clear that Polak makes use of the same type of room, with most importantly the window (figs. 21 & 22). Vermeer makes use of the idea of light falling through a window, to highlight certain elements in his painting, such as the face of the woman and the letter. The use of light by Vermeer is softer than the use of light by for instance Caravaggio, and the differences between light and dark parts are less intense. In the paintings by Vermeer, the whole painting seems to be touched by a soft glowing light, which is often referred to as the 'Delftse licht'.

When observing the photograph by Polak, it at first sight seems that he makes use of the same light as Vermeer, which is the soft light from the window. When having a closer look, it becomes however clear that the light does not really derive from the window, but from other spotlights inside the space. Moreover, the contrast between the dark parts and light parts are high, and more intense than in the painting of Vermeer, especially when observing the photograph of the woman (fig. 1). The dress of this woman is almost glowing in the dark, and the wall behind her is completely black. The window itself is also quite dark, instead of very light. When comparing the photograph by Polak to the painting by Caravaggio, it becomes clear that there are similarities (figs. 23 & 24). Polak makes use of the same kind of spotlights and the dark surroundings are present as well, in an inside place where daylight seems to be lacking. Hence, Polak's photograph contains many resemblances with Vermeer on the level of representation, but the actual usage of light could be defined as chiaroscuro in the sense of the usage of spotlights and strong contrasts between light and dark tones. When thinking about the relationship between the photograph by Polak and painting, another crucial element is notable. The paintings namely contain colours, while the photographs are created in black and white. The presence of colour in painting is more connected to nature and the real life, although the colours are also a construction of this real life. As writer and literary critic Ossip Brik notes in 1926 "in life we certainly do see things in color. And in painting things do have color. But the two sets of colors are not the same, they differ. Painting cannot transmit actual colors. It can merely imitate with greater or less approximation the coloring that we see in nature."³⁹ Polak's photograph, on the other hand, cannot imitate color from nature, but it does show light and dark tonalities. Since the term chiaroscuro literally means bright and dark, and is related to shadows instead of colours, the photograph by Polak comes closer to the essence of the meaning of chiaroscuro, than paintings. Because of the black and white qualities of the medium of photography, the

³⁹ Brik, 1989 [1926], 214.

medium suits the term *chiaroscuro* very well.

Although the focus on the medium of photography could suggest the presence of a close relationship with nature and mechanical aspects, the relationship between the photographs by Polak and light should be analysed as constructed. Polak creates the *chiaroscuro* himself, by making use of various light sources. The photograph is created in the pre-photographic state, during the staging with light in the studio. This means that the photographs by Polak are not that much a reflection and absorption of natural light, but that his photographs could be observed as a construction of light created by himself. This could be related to *chiaroscuro* in painting, since the light in painting is also generally constructed. Painters staged their models in the studio and likewise could decide to exaggerate the light and dark tones. A photographer could create the same effect in the darkroom. Instead of having a direct contact between the light and the light sensitive material, or letting the natural light fall through the photographic lens, Polak seems to already have created certain tone scales of light in his studio before photographing. The use of light by Polak could thus be defined as a pre-photographic construction, created in the studio before the creation of the image. This means that the creation of the photograph already starts, during the creation of light in the studio.

Hence, on the level of light, the photograph created by Polak seems to go further than just being a copy of a painterly style. It becomes clear that Polak constructs the light and dark parts of the photographs himself, by making use of the spotlight by Caravaggio and the representations by Vermeer. This means that he does not only use light to refer to a certain atmosphere or style, but he also uses light to organize his photograph. Moreover, the photograph refers to historical painting techniques and the usage of light, which is *chiaroscuro*. When thinking about the essence of the medium of photography, light is needed to create the photograph, and the photograph shows what was in front of the lens. However, the photograph by Polak is not solely related to nature and the mechanical aspects of photography, since the image could be defined as constructed in a pre-photographic stage. Therefore, it becomes clear that there is variety present within in the concept of light in photography. The creation of the photograph is not solely a mechanical act, or a pencil of nature, but the pre-photographic process is part of this photograph as well. Therefore, Polak's photograph shows that the concept of light is blurred, and that the photograph reaches for the goal of including photography as a fine art on another levels than reproducing painting as well.

It has become clear that both Berssenbrugge's photogram and Polak's photograph add a new layer to the photo-theoretical concept of light. Light is not solely present as a mechanical aspect, or as pencil of nature, since the two photographs show that light could be used in other ways. Light is used to create the images in a technical sense, light is present,

but light is also inherently part of the representation, and used to experiment and alter the photograph. The photographs are especially photographs, because both photographs need light to create the image, as well as use light on various levels of the representation. The photograph by Berssenbrugge cannot be defined as mechanical, since he makes use of light in a direct way, by absorbing the light without any intervention of a camera and by placing the objects directly on the light sensitive material. In addition, Berssenbrugge's photograph cannot be defined as a pencil of nature, because there are no recognizable objects represented, and because the artist is present. Polak's photographs likewise should not be observed as mechanical and as pencil of nature, because he makes use of light in a constructed way, by staging the light before the creation of the photograph. Both photographs show that the creation of the photograph started in the pre-photographic stage, and that the concept of light in photography is more varied than has been thought. The concept of light is blurring within these core elements of the medium of photography itself. Next to that, the discussed photographs show a relationship with painting, which goes further than the presence of stylistic similarities. Light is used to organize the photographs in a pre-photographic stage, light is used to refer to painterly techniques such as chiaroscuro and abstract painting, and light is always needed to create the image. Therefore, these photographs show that the medium of photography is more complicated, than has been argued in the early twentieth century.

The relationship between the discussed images, light and the characteristics of the medium of photography could further be investigated when relating the images to the mirror and the window. This because the concepts of the mirror and window could both be related to the presence of light as well as to the medium of photography. Considering the mirror and a window in photography, a mirror reflects the light, and seems to bounce the light back to the observer. A window, however, does not reflect a lot of light, and the light is able to shine through the glass, while the observer is able to look to another reality. Interestingly, both photographs by Berssenbrugge and Polak are observed through glass, since the photograph by Polak is created by using a glass photographic lens, and the photogram by Berssenbrugge is created by using glasses on light sensitive paper.

The concepts of mirror and window are both related to the presence of light, and are used as a certain metaphor related to the observation of photographs. This means that the two concepts are related to how an observer approaches a photograph. As Victor Burgin notes, photography is generally encountered as a window to the world, especially in

sociological texts.⁴⁰ This means that observers regularly expect to see a representation of a certain reality in the photograph – which means that photographs are approached as a figurative window to the world – especially considering news photography or anthropology. Historian, photographer and curator John Szarkowski notes in his influential book *Mirrors and Windows American Photography Since 1960* that there is “a fundamental dichotomy in contemporary photography between those who think of photography as a means of self-expression and those who think of it as a method of exploration”.⁴¹ He makes a difference between the romantic view of the artistic function in photography, and the realist view, in which the romantic view refers to the observer’s own understanding, while in the realist view the world exists independent of the observer.⁴² Szarkowski argues that there could be two different conceptions of what a photograph is: “a mirror, reflecting a portrait of the artist who made it, or a window, through which one might better know the world”.⁴³ When approaching the photograph as a window, a certain truth is considered to be present and the observer expects to observe the reality. When approaching the photograph as a mirror, this relationship with real life is less present. The observer actually seems to observe the self, the artist, or the medium itself. The mirror could be related to the mechanical aspects of photography, as poet and essayist Tristan Tzara notes that “as a mirror throws back an image without effort, as an echo throws back a voice without asking why, beauty of matter belongs to no one: from now on it is a product of physics and chemistry.”⁴⁴

When focusing on the presence of light, both the photogram by Berssenbrugge as well as the photograph by Polak seem to play with the assumption of photography as a mirror and a window. Since the photogram by Berssenbrugge is created by light in a first sense, without the interruption of a camera, the photogram mainly seems to be related to the mirror. The light is absorbed into the light sensitive material, and the photogram eventually seems to bounce back the light to the observer. On the level of the observer, the photogram does not seem to show a certain reality. The observer probably will not have the experience of looking towards a reality, when looking at the photogram. The observation of the photogram does not lead the viewer through the photogram towards another reality, but the observation stops at the photogram itself. On the other hand, Berssenbrugge’s photogram is closely related to a window, since the photogram is created by making use of a glass. In addition, the photogram does absorb light instead of reflecting the light as a mirror. When the representation of the glass is recognized, instead of abstract shapes, a certain reality seems to become present again. In that sense, the photogram could be defined as a window,

⁴⁰ Burgin, 1989, 2.

⁴¹ Szarkowski, 1978, 11.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 18-19.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁴⁴ Tzara, 1989 [1922], 6.

looking through a glass.

The photograph by Polak is defined as a secondary photograph, and the light shines through glass on various levels such as through the glass lens and through the negative glass plate. Therefore, the idea of a window is literally present in the technical process. The light did not stop at the light sensitive material, such as with the photogram, but the light shined through this light sensitive material. At the same time, the photograph by Polak was defined as constructed, and the observer would probably never experience the photograph as a window to a certain reality, such as with news photography. The idea of the window is present in the photograph by Polak on the level of light, but on the level of representation, the photograph could be experienced more as a mirror. The photograph shows what was in front of the camera at that moment, but the observer mainly sees the pre-photographic phase of the photograph, in which the photograph was constructed with light, instead of reality.

How, then, could the images be experienced by the observer considering the complex medium of photography? Theorists Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, discussing 'remediation', introduce the term transparent immediacy and hypermediacy. According to them, transparent immediacy refers to the idea in which the observer ignores the medium and looks directly towards the represented subject.⁴⁵ This means that the observer does not realize it is observing a specific medium, but that the attention is drawn towards what is represented. Considering news photography, people are for instance often ignoring the fact that they are observing a photograph; they immediately try to observe the reality. Hypermediacy, however, refers to the idea in which the observer looks directly at the medium instead of through the medium to a certain expected reality.⁴⁶ This for instance could happen when someone is observing an abstract painting or sculpture. Because there is no representation of a reality present, the observer becomes aware that one is looking at a certain material or medium.

Both concepts introduced by Bolter and Grusin could be related to the idea of a mirror and a window in photography. The mirror would then be connected to hypermedia, since the observer is always confronted with the thing itself when looking into a mirror. The observer becomes aware of the medium one is observing. However, in a mirror, the observer mainly also becomes aware of itself, since the mirror shows the reflection of the person looking into it. The window, on the other hand, is considered to be a transparent immediacy, since the observer expects to look through a window, to a certain reality. The observer ignores that there is still a glass, or a medium between itself and the reality. Hence, the light could be reflected back to the observer, or the light could fall through a window, towards another

⁴⁵ Bolter and Grusin, 2000 [1999], 34.

⁴⁶ Ibidem.

reality. How, then, could the photograph by Polak and the photogram by Berssenbrugge be related to the concepts of transparent immediacy and hypermediacy? Although the photogram by Berssenbrugge at first sight might be related to the mirror, and the photograph by Polak to the window, it became clear that both photographs do not refer to a certain reality such as news photography. The photographed persons or things were there at that moment in front of the camera or on the light sensitive paper, but the photographs refer to a pre-photographic stage, or to unrecognizable figures. Both photographs could therefore not be considered as transparent immediacy, because the observer does not look directly at the represented objects in the sense of a reality: the images do not lead the viewer to another reality. Instead, the photograph by Polak and the photogram by Berssenbrugge could be related to hypermediacy, because they make use of light in such a way, that the viewer does not ignore the medium anymore. The observer does not look through the medium to a certain reality, but looks at the medium itself and the photographic concept of light in relationship to the medium of painting. Therefore, when observing the two images, the viewer is confronted with the blurring boundaries of the medium of photography itself.

In this chapter, it has become clear that the photogram by Berssenbrugge could be related to the concept of light on three levels: the direct absorption, the direct printing process, the direct touching contact. The photograph by Polak could be related to the concept of light considering the construction of chiaroscuro in his studio, black and white tones, and the reference to the historical painting technique of chiaroscuro. Both photographers applied abilities of the medium of photography related to light, and both photographers deviate from the idea of photography as a mechanical medium connected to reality. Both photographers create the light and dark parts themselves, in a pre-photographic stage, and the photographed light did not already exist in reality without intervention. The photographers did not only use light, but they created the photographs in collaboration with light. Light is used to create the images in a technical sense, but light is also part of the representation, and is used to discover the medium of photography as well as painting. Although both images are strongly connected to the etymology of the word photography, both photographs could also be defined as hypermediacy. This means that the images make the observer aware of the medium of photography itself, as if they were a mirror reflecting the light and the medium in the face of the observer. Hence, both photographs show various relationships with light, light rays and spot lights, which shows that the definition of photography as solely the recoding of a given reality is more varied than has been thought, already very early in the twentieth century.

2. Playing with the Real: Straight versus Composed Photography

The first chapter focused on the relationship between the images by Polak and Berssenbrugge and the concept of light, which is one of the most literal connections considering the medium and etymology of photography. In this chapter, the focus will be on concepts which are one step further away from the etymology of the word photography, but which are still considered to be crucial for the medium. I am talking about the concepts of straight and composed photography, which focus on themes concerning reality, objectivity and manipulation. At first glance, the genre photograph by Polak would probably be defined as a composed photograph, while the photogram by Berssenbrugge would be defined as a straight photograph. This, because the genre photograph by Polak seems to be posed, while the photogram by Berssenbrugge seems to be related to the real visible world and the pencil of nature.

The discussion related to straight and composed photography was already present in the various photo associations in the early twentieth century. Art historian John Taylor notes that in Britain around 1900 the photographers were divided into two camps, which were the purists and the pictorialists. He argues that both groups rejected the idea of facts through optical precision, in favour of individual expression. The purists, according to Taylor, wanted to obtain the perfect negative, while the pictorialists used manipulative printing processes to reach for the “beautiful and picturesque print”.⁴⁷ Within the pictorialist movement, there were likewise different approaches to photography. The pictorialists did favour individual expression, but the way of reaching this goal could also be divided into straight and composed elements. At the end of the nineteenth century photographer Henry Peach Robinson approached photography as a form of picture making in the sense of construction, in which manipulation could be used to make the print. In contrast, photographer Peter Henry Emerson approached photography in the sense of a medium with its own special characteristics, which does not need retouching or other manipulation.⁴⁸

Straight photography has generally been defined as photography which is not manipulated, and in which the emphasis has been placed on its documentary value. The straight photograph shows the reality as it has appeared and is strongly related to objectivity and the truth value. This also means that so-called pure materials which are specific for the medium are used – as mentioned by Kracauer or Greenberg – such as the silver gelatin print.⁴⁹ This argument goes for instance against the pictorialist use of gum prints, oil prints or

⁴⁷ Taylor, 1978, 7.

⁴⁸ Nördstrom, 2008, 37. Doty, 1979, 16.

⁴⁹ Greenberg, 1986 [1940]. Kracauer, 1980 [1960].

the combination of several printing techniques. The straight photograph is furthermore created without cropping or retouching. Since the invention of photography, photographs are often defined as straight. Photographer and pioneer Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre for instance notes in 1838 that photography “is a chemical and physical process that gives nature the facility to reproduce herself”.⁵⁰ Since the process is chemical and nature is the one executing the photograph, a sense of objectivity is highlighted. In addition, Fox Talbot emphasizes the proof function of photography and the relationship with the true law of nature.⁵¹ This idea was also present in later theories about photography, such as by André Bazin who notes in the mid-twentieth century that “all the arts are based on the presence of man, only photography derives an advantage from his absence. Photography affects us like a phenomenon in nature, like a flower or a snowflake whose vegetable or earthly origins are inseparable part of their beauty.”⁵² According to him, the difference between photography and other media is the fact that photography does not need the presence of people, and even profits from the absence of people. This seems to be the ultimate form of straight photography, in which the presence of humans is not preferred. The comparison with the flower shows that according to him, the beauty of photography lies in its nature and the relationship with earth. Theorist and sociologist Siegfried Kracauer moreover states in 1960 that the photograph had to stay true to a “straight approach to life” to obtain an artistic quality.⁵³ Here he thus literally mentions the word straight, when talking about photography, which in this sense also seems to mean not edited. Already in 1913, writer and artist Marius de Zayas stated that photography is the “plastic verification of a fact” and noted that the difference between art and photography lies within the difference between the idea and nature.⁵⁴ This means that straight photography is especially related to nature and facts.

In contrast, composed photographs could be defined as photographs in which the subject has been manipulated. There are three different forms of composed photography which could be present in the photograph separately or simultaneously. Firstly, the photograph could be composed in the pre-photographic stage before recording. Secondly, the photograph could be manipulated during the creation of the photograph, and thirdly the photograph could be edited after recording, in the dark room. In short, this could be defined as staging, framing and editing. Generally, the scene is created, rather than present in real life. The relationship with reality and the mechanical is thus less strong, since the presence of the human is needed to create the photograph. Composed photography was already present in the early forms of pictorialist photography, in which the photographs were altered

⁵⁰ Daguerre, 2017 [1838], 37.

⁵¹ Armstrong, 1998, 108.

⁵² Bazin, 1960, 7.

⁵³ Kracauer, 1980 [1960], 254.

⁵⁴ De Zayas, 1980 [1913], 125.

or posed. One could think of the blurred photographs created by photographer Julia Margaret Cameron, of whom it is known that she used models, soft focus lenses and that she cropped her photographs (fig. 30).⁵⁵ This means that Cameron made use of the three different forms of composed photography, in one photograph. It seems that photography was already manipulated in the nineteenth century on several levels. Theorist David Green for instance notes that the act of staging has been part of photography from its inception, because of technical issues such as large cameras and a lengthy exposure time, which made planning and staging necessary.⁵⁶

The question in this chapter is, how the photogram by Berssenbrugge and the photograph by Polak could be related to the concepts of straight and composed photography. Both concepts seem to be crucial for the medium of photography, and are often presented as oppositional. Do both photographs contain this large contrast between straight and composed photography, or could the photographic concepts be defined as more blurred than that? This is especially crucial because, until now, the photogram has often been related to straight photography and the genre photograph has mainly been related to composed photography. The question is whether these categories are really that strict, and whether one could speak of these kind of categories at all. Firstly, the photogram by Berssenbrugge will be related to straight and composed photography and secondly, the photograph by Polak will be related to these concepts. After that, the differences and similarities will be discussed, and the images will be related to the idea of photography in the expanded field. Finally, the two photographs will be related to the concept of the simulacrum, introduced by philosopher Jean Baudrillard.

The photogram by Berssenbrugge could be related to the concepts of straight and composed photography on various levels. Considering straight photography, the photogram by Berssenbrugge is firstly an imprint of nature, secondly a mechanical aspect is present, moreover a pure material is used and finally the photogram does not contain posed representations. Fox Talbot notes that the photogram stands close to the origin of photography, since it comes in direct contact with this origin. He therefore notes that it has “made-by-nature qualifications”.⁵⁷ The photogram by Berssenbrugge comes in direct contact with the object, just as the prints created by Fox Talbot in his book *The Pencil of Nature* (fig. 17). This would underline the straight element in the photogram by Berssenbrugge. In the twentieth century, the photogram is regularly defined as a mechanical medium related to the age of speed, production and machines. This differs from the early thoughts about the

⁵⁵ Kracauer, 1980 [1960], 249.

⁵⁶ Green, 2009, 103.

⁵⁷ Armstrong, 1998, 158.

photogram by for instance Fox Talbot, since the focus is placed more on the mechanical instead of the relationship with a natural process. Concerning the Dutch straight photography movement, Kees Broos and Flip Bool state in the late twentieth century that the photographers often made use of the photogram, that they resisted pictorialism, were against artistic pretensions and that they pursued objectivity.⁵⁸ It could remind the viewer of what Moholy-Nagy defines as the century which belongs to light, with advertisements, speed, movement and machines.⁵⁹ In this sense, the straight element of the photogram by Berssenbrugge is emphasized. In addition, the material of this particular photogram could be defined as material that is specific for the medium of photography. Berssenbrugge used a gelatin silver print in combination with light. He for instance did not make use of the typical pictorialist materials such as the gum print or the oil print, or a combination of several prints. Furthermore, humans or clearly recognizable objects are not represented in this particular photogram. This means that the idea of posing is less present, since there is nothing represented in the photogram which could pose at all. Moholy-Nagy notes that the photogram creates a language of light that is devoid of representational meaning but still capable of eliciting an immediate visual experience.⁶⁰ The photogram by Berssenbrugge could likewise be seen as a language of light, devoid of representational meaning, both related to the ideas about straight photography by early theorists such as Fox Talbot, and later theorists such as Bazin. Therefore, the photogram could be observed as straight and without manipulations in the sense of the technique, the material and the representations.

On the other hand, considering composed photography, the photogram by Berssenbrugge firstly contains the presence of the artist, secondly no connection with reality seems to be present, moreover the photogram is blurred and finally, the image is not neutral. The photogram by Berssenbrugge does not show recognizable objects from nature such as flowers, which the prints by Talbot do. Berssenbrugge's image shows undefinable shapes, which cannot be related to reality and objectivity immediately, and therefore, it is harder to define the natural origin or the presence of reality. Moreover, Berssenbrugge himself seems to be present in the creation of the photogram, which could be seen as a more personal instead of an objective process. Therefore, the process is not as objective as the growth of a flower or snowflake, such as Bazin argued, and should not solely be observed as a pencil of nature.⁶¹ In addition, the new photography movement and modernism are often related to sharp focused photography, but the photograms by Berssenbrugge are created with a soft focus, and the tonal quality is not high. Christian Peterson for instance notes in 1997 that

⁵⁸ Broos and Bool, 1989, 15.

⁵⁹ Moholy-Nagy, 1989 [1922].

⁶⁰ Moholy-Nagy, 1989 [1927], 90.

⁶¹ Bazin, 1960, 7.

pictorial images needed to be “carefully composed, softly focused, and low in quality”, which according to him differs from most utilitarian photographs, since they are sharply focused and full in tonal range.⁶² In addition, Peterson argues that modern photographs were camera-generated images that “showed no darkroom sleight of hand”.⁶³ Berssenbrugge’s image, hence, differs from the utilitarian photograph as well as the modern photograph by being softly focus and low in quality, and with this, his photogram is closer related to the blurred photographs by for instance Julia Margaret Cameron, than to what is considered to be sharp and modern photography, such as the photograph by Dutch photographer Paul Schuitema (fig. 30 & 32).

This means that in the sense of the undefinable shapes, the manipulation by the artist, and the blurred focus, the photogram could be defined more as a composed image, instead of a straight photograph. The photogram by Berssenbrugge, does not only contain straight elements but also contains composed elements: it seems to be a combination of both extremes. Interestingly, Fox Talbot himself already wrote that the photogram could be seen as a combination of “consummately artificial and quintessentially natural”, which is thus a comparable combination of artifice and nature.⁶⁴ This suggests that Fox Talbot already was of the opinion that the photogram is not solely connected to nature and thus straight, but that there is also an artificial element present, which could be defined as composed.

How, then, could the genre photograph by Polak be related to these concepts? Polak’s photograph would at first sight be defined as composed, the question is whether this genre photograph could also be defined as a more hybrid form of straight and composed photography. The genre photograph seems to be very different than the photogram by Berssenbrugge. The photograph is figurative, and humans as well as recognizable objects are depicted. Polak’s photograph immediately reminds the viewer of a seventeenth-century painting, but it is also clear that it is a photograph instead of a painting. In addition, it is clear that it is not a photograph of a painting (fig. 29). The genre photograph by Polak could be related to composed photography on the level of representation, which is connected to the theatre and posing. When relating the genre photograph to concepts such as the pencil of nature, it is clear that the representation is less directly connected to the imprint of nature than the photogram by Berssenbrugge. When focussing solely on the representation, the photograph has been created in a studio, by using props, costumes and other artificial elements. In 1999, photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto created a similar looking photograph

⁶² Peterson, 1997, 16.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁶⁴ Armstrong, 1998, 117.

named *The Music Lesson*, which looks almost exactly like the painting *The Music Lesson* by Johannes Vermeer (1662-1665) (figs. 26-28). The same confusion is present when observing the photograph by Sugimoto, and the question arises whether the photograph has been taken from real life, whether it is a painting or maybe a theatre. In the case of the photograph by Sugimoto, the depicted figures are made from wax, and on show in the Madame Tussauds museum in Amsterdam. Just as in the photograph by Polak, the photographed room is three-dimensional, but the depicted people are wax figures instead of real people. Interestingly, Sugimoto both created this photograph in black and white tones and as a pigment print (figs. 26 & 27). The black and white version of the photograph show less confusion about whether the image is a painting or a photograph, but it becomes harder to define whether the depicted people are real or not. The photograph by Polak is solely created in black and white, and likewise confuses the observer whether the depicted woman is real or not. Both the photographs by Polak and Sugimoto refer to the concept of a *tableau vivant*, which is defined as living sculptures. Steve Jacobs notes considering the *tableau vivant* that they are three-dimensional scenes created in a studio, based on two-dimensional compositions of the painting, which were based on three-dimensional forms in the artist's studio.⁶⁵ In the photographs by Polak and Sugimoto, these three-dimensional scenes are created by models which are turned into a two-dimensional image again by photographing them. Therefore, the photograph by Polak reminds the viewer of posing, the theatre and a filmset, which is related to composed photography.

A theatre is often defined as a place where performances and plays are given. It both refers to the location, as well as the act of playing itself. In the theatre, often a narrative is performed, and props and costumes are present. In the book *Theatres of the Real*, various authors focus on the theatrical aspect which is present in contemporary photography. According to theorist David Green, the concept of theatricality is related to the notions of deception and falsity. Green argues that there is a sense that what is theatrical is immediately unnatural and untrue.⁶⁶ It seems that when theatrical elements are used in a photograph, such as costumes or a stage, the photograph is defined as not real. It is regularly expected that photographs do not contain staged scenes or props, because of the documentary elements and the truth value of the medium. The genre photograph by Polak seems to be a combination of the place or the theatre, which is the studio, and the act of playing itself, which are the actors. This means that there is a large composed element present in Polak's photograph. Almost everything which is depicted in this photograph by Polak could be defined as artificial: it is a *mise-en-scène*.

⁶⁵ Jacobs, 2011, 89.

⁶⁶ Green, 2009, 104.

In contrast, Polak's image could be related to straight photography on the level of the technique and material, and the connection with the referent. When thinking about the technique and material of the photograph by Polak, there are no clear indications of editing, cropping and altering afterwards. The observer thus sees what was really there at that moment in the studio. There is a direct relationship with the depicted people and objects, since these things were really there at that moment. In addition, the photograph is created by using a photo camera, and could thus be defined as more mechanical than the photogram by Berssenbrugge. The hands of the photographer are less literally present in the process of photographing, than in the process of making a photogram. The element of posing, which is the composed element, takes place before making the photograph, and not in the mechanical process itself. The composed element is thus present in the pre-photographic stage of the photograph. Therefore, just as the photogram by Berssenbrugge, the photograph created by Polak is a combination of straight and composed elements on various levels of the creation of the photograph, which could be defined as a hybrid form.

When comparing the photogram by Berssenbrugge to the genre photograph by Polak, both the images contain elements which are traditionally defined as straight and elements which are defined as composed. The photogram by Berssenbrugge is more directly related to the idea of the pencil of nature, than the photograph by Polak. This, while the photograph by Polak is more mechanical in the sense of the apparatus. The photogram by Berssenbrugge is more straight considering the representation than the photograph by Polak, since the photograph by Polak is related to the theatre and posing. The photograph by Polak is sharply focused and of a large tone scale, while the photogram by Berssenbrugge is blurred. Both photographers are playing with the notions of composed and straight photography in different stages in the creation of the photograph. While the photographs at first sight seem to be so different from each other, they both could be defined as hybrid combinations of composed and straight elements. This goes against the theories about straight and composed elements which draw hard lines between the two categories, such as the difference between purists and pictorialists, or picture taking and picture making. It becomes clear that one cannot speak of two different categories which are strictly divided, because these categories are both present in one photograph at the same time in various proportions and levels. This, exactly because the photographs are photographs: generally speaking, photography always seems to contain both straight and composed elements, because it is always connected to light and reality, and always connected to manipulation and framing. The discussed images, hence, show that the various categories and boundaries are too narrow, and that more hybrid forms are present as well.

This hybrid relationship could be connected to the idea of photography's expanded field. This expanded field of photography was introduced by art historian George Baker, who

based himself on earlier writings by art theorist Rosalind Krauss. Krauss was a pupil of Clement Greenberg, but eventually argued against him, by introducing the idea of an expanded field in modern sculpture in 1979.⁶⁷ In this article, she introduces new categories of modern sculpture that are a combination of various other categories, which are in between other categories, or which are created out of opposites. According to Krauss, “the expanded field is thus generated by problematizing the set of oppositions between which the modernist category sculpture is suspended”⁶⁸ Krauss states about sculpture that it “had entered a categorical no-man’s-land: it was what was on or in front of a building that was not the building, or what was in the landscape that was not the landscape.”⁶⁹ In 2005, George Baker used this idea and the same schemes to investigate the expanded field of photography. Baker states that postmodern photography is in crisis and in transformation, and that it has moved to the cinematic instead of the photographic, by for instance using other media or relating themselves to older media.⁷⁰ Therefore, he introduces new categories such as the digital montage, the cinematic photograph or projected images, which are in between the concepts of narrative, not-narrative, stasis and not-stasis.⁷¹

In the theories by Krauss and Baker, the medium is expanding by making use of other media, such as architecture, or cinema. Krauss focuses on expanding concepts in space, while Baker focuses on expanding concepts in time. When thinking about the photogram by Berssenbrugge and the photograph by Polak, however, the medium of the images is not expanding in the sense of space and time. Instead, the medium is expanding within the essence of the medium itself. The images by Polak and Berssenbrugge make use of characteristics of other media, such as the seventeenth-century genre painting, or abstract painting, but are also related to elements which are considered to be specific for photography. The discussed images could not be defined as straight or composed, but are combinations of these two concepts, especially because they are photographs. By moving back to these photo-theoretical concepts, such as straight and composed photography, it becomes clear that within this core, the boundaries are blurring. In addition, within this essence of the medium of photography, the photographs are related to painting, which could be defined as a expansion in representation. This means that the two discussed photographs are expanding, but not from of the medium of photography into larger categories, but within the medium itself, into more blurred categories.

Hence, the images by Berssenbrugge and Polak are both straight and composed, or not-straight and not-composed, and various combinations of these terms are possible. It

⁶⁷ Krauss, 1979.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 38

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁷⁰ Baker, 2005, 122.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 131.

becomes additionally clear that the transformation of the medium photography already took place earlier, than in the postmodern era. The photographs namely show that these transformations already started in the nineteenth century such as in the photographs by Cameron (fig. 30), or in the early twentieth century by Polak and Berssenbrugge. Various relationships with painting were created, and the photo-theoretical concepts were blurred. The expanded field of photography is therefore not solely a phenomenon of contemporary photography and the twenty first century, but started earlier, by playing with the barriers of what was considered to be photography.

The last part of this chapter will deal with the concept of the copy and the simulacrum. When thinking about the concepts of straight and composed photography, the question was raised whether photography could be observed as a fact and a pencil of nature, or whether photography could be observed as a manipulation. The question is how these two components could be related to the idea of photography as a copy, and what new insights could be given considering the two photographs and the idea of copy. Is a copy always connected to composed photography, or is a copy always connected to straight photography, and what does the presence of the copy tell us about the medium of photography?

The concept of copy seems to have elements in common with the term theatre. Art historian Joanna Lowry notes that modernity itself has become a theatre, which bears resemblance to the real and is sometimes hard to distinguish from it, but which also shows a fundamental sense of loss and nostalgia for “that which can now only be experienced through representation”.⁷² This could be related to photography in general, which is also often a representation of the real. The photograph likewise bears resemblance to the real and is sometimes hard to distinguish from the real. When thinking about the photogram by Berssenbrugge and the photograph by Polak, however, this sense of reality or the real does not seem to be present or seems to be less present. The idea that the real can only be experienced through representations could be connected to the concept of the simulacrum, introduced by Jean Baudrillard. He states that the simulacrum could be defined as a model or double, without an original, which turns into its own reality, defined as the hyperreal.⁷³ Of course photography in general could be seen as a copy without an original on two levels – or as Rosalind Krauss defines it as “a false copy” – since photography is a copy of a certain reality which is not a reality anymore, and since it is reproducible into many new copies, all becoming its own hyperreal.⁷⁴

⁷² Lowry, 2009, 82.

⁷³ Baudrillard, 1994 [1981], 3.

⁷⁴ Krauss, 1984, 63.

The genre photograph by Polak seems to be a copy of a certain reality and is reproducible. However, the photograph is not a copy of the real world, but is a copy of a seventeenth-century painting, or a copy of a theatre set. Some of his photographs could be related to specific paintings by Johannes Vermeer, while others are a combination of elements of various paintings, or inspired on Vermeer.⁷⁵ The reality is already not a reality anymore before creating the photograph, since the photograph is made of something which does not exist. Therefore, the reality is transformed into an own reality, which is afterwards transformed into a photograph, or into a hyperreal. The theatre, performance and props seem to be connected to the simulacrum, since they are regularly experienced as a model of reality, or as a copy without a real origin.

The idea of the hyperreal is already present in Polak's photograph because of the theatre, but it becomes more present since the images created by Polak are not a theatre, but are photographs. Victor Burgin notes that the photograph abstracts form and mediates the actual. He gives the example of a photograph of three people standing together, which according to him in reality could have been a "live model, a two-dimensional 'cut-out' figure, and a wax dummy". Burgin states that when you see these people in real life, you would quickly know them for what they are: a real person, a flat figure and a wax doll. However, when these figures are photographed, one cannot be certain of this anymore.⁷⁶ This means that by photographing the objects and people it is not clear anymore what is real and what is not. In the photograph by Polak, it is not clear where the theatre or the props end, and where the real starts, or where the photograph starts. This becomes even more clear when comparing the photograph by Polak, to the photograph by Sugimoto and the painting by Vermeer (figs. 26-28). In the two photographs, it is not clear whether real people are represented or wax figures. There thus seem to be two levels of copies present in the photograph by Polak, which do not have an origin anymore. The simulacrum thus seems to be doubled in the photograph by Polak, since it is a double of a seventeenth-century painting which turns into its own reality, and a double of a theatre set, which are afterwards photographed, and therefore a second double is created. There are two elements which turn into an own reality, without an original.

Interestingly, Susan Sontag notes that "the consequences of lying have to be more central for photography than they ever can be for painting, because the flat, usually rectangular images which are photographs make a claim to be true that paintings can never make. A fake painting (one whose attribution is false) falsifies the history of art. A fake photograph (one that has been retouched or tampered with, or whose caption is false)

⁷⁵ Grootes, 1991.

⁷⁶ Burgin, 1982, 61.

falsifies reality.” The photograph by Polak would probably be defined as falsifying reality, since it is a copy of a copy, and mainly connected to the theatre and play. However, the seventeenth-century painting itself seems to be less falsifying reality. This shows that it is expected that photography, especially from the early twentieth century, will consist of a certain relationship with reality, although this relationship is always a combination of straight and composed elements. The photograph by Polak could be defined as a simulacrum on two levels, but there is also always a connection with reality on the basis of light, which is also a copy. Therefore, it seems that the straight and composed elements in photography could both be observed as copies, although the composed elements are more experienced as false, and the straight elements are more experienced as a reality.

The photogram by Berssenbrugge seems to differ from the photograph by Polak on the level of a copy, because the notions of theatre and play are less present. Therefore, the photogram seems to be more connected to reality. When thinking about the process of creating a photogram, there was also a certain relationship with the pencil of nature, although the idea of copying still seems to be present. The photogram is always a copy of the object which is placed on the light sensitive material, since it leaves behind a trace of what was there. Art historian Carol Armstrong notes that photography is defined as an original copy and according to her “its originality predicated on its derivation in and production by nature”. This means that photography is always a copy, but also always a certain originality is present because of the relationship between photography and reality. After that, Armstrong notes that the photogram is “the most original of original copies, with no subject, no apparatus standing in for the subject, no space interposed between the original and the copy, and therefore no interruption of the direct contact between them or of the natural continuum between one and the other”.⁷⁷ Therefore, the photogram by Berssenbrugge is experienced as copy, but not as a double copy such as the photograph by Polak. The photogram is still a copy without an original, which turns into a reality and therefore could be defined as a simulacrum. Interestingly, this idea of the loss of the original or reality is even more present in the photogram by Berssenbrugge, since there are no recognizable figures or objects left anymore. There once was a recognizable object on the light sensitive material, such as a glass, but this object is not recognizable anymore in the photogram. Therefore, the photogram could indeed be defined as a hyperreal. Although the photogram by Berssenbrugge at first glance seems to be more straight, even the straight elements of the photograph could still be defined as a copy and a simulacrum.

Baudrillard notes that there is a difference between pretending and simulation, since pretending leaves the principle of reality intact, while simulation threatens all the differences

⁷⁷ Armstrong, 1998, 159-160.

between the concepts of true, false, real and the imaginary.⁷⁸ In images created by Polak and Berssenbrugge, the differences between the false, real and the imaginary are not threatened, but questioned. The photographs are in various ways combinations of straight elements and composed elements, and the photographs both still contain a relationship with reality. The principle of reality is still intact, but on the other hand the two photographers are playing with these notions of reality. Therefore it investigates how photography, reality and manipulation are related to each other. According to Krauss, photography serves to deconstruct the whole system of copy, model, original and replication. Photography has, in her opinion, the power to put into question the concept of uniqueness, originality, the author, and the individuality of self-expression.⁷⁹ This is exactly what the photographs by Berssenbrugge and Polak seem to be doing, even though probably not consequently intended by the makers. The concepts of copy and original are put into question, and the observers become aware of the various levels of composed and straight photography, that could be present in one photograph.

It hence has become clear that especially in articles related to pictorialism, writers have often made harsh distinctions between straight and composed photography, such as between purists and pictorialists, or picture taking and picture making. Many theorists have defined photography as a medium strongly related to the imprint of nature, the documentary value and the mechanical aspects. Other theorists have highlighted certain aspects of manipulation, such as framing, posing or editing. By relating the photogram by Berssenbrugge and the genre photograph by Polak to the concepts of straight and composed photography, it became clear that they could be related to both concepts in several ways. While the photogram seems to be more straight, there are also many composed elements present, and while the genre photograph seems to be composed, there are also some straight elements present. Therefore, the fixed categories considering straight or composed photography are too strict, and various fusions of both categories are possible. When thinking about photography in the expanded field, in this case, the boundaries are blurring within the heart of the medium itself. By moving back to the essence of the medium of photography, it has become clear that the strict difference between the photo-theoretical concepts of straight and composed photography, should be observed as more blurred and fluent. In addition, especially because these photographs are photographs, they are always related to a certain reality, as well as to manipulations. Therefore, both photographs could be defined as a simulacrum, in which the straight elements are experienced as more real, and the composed elements as more false, while they could actually both be defined as a

⁷⁸ Baudrillard, 1994 [1981], 4.

⁷⁹ Krauss, 1984, 63.

hyperreal. Finally, the photographs do not threaten the relationships between reality and imaginary, but they question these concepts. Therefore the photographs, as Krauss argued, serve to deconstruct the whole system of copy, original, uniqueness and the author, although probably not intentionally created for this purpose by the makers. Hence, by opening up the concepts of straight and composed photography and by probing the limits and possibilities of the medium of photography, Richard Polak and Henri Berssenbrugge have created hybrid images, which show the blurring of the boundaries in the medium of photography in an early stage.

3. Frozen Photographic Moments: the Presence of Time and Memory

Time does not seem to be the first element that pops up into the mind when observing the photograph by Polak and the photogram by Berssenbrugge. However, when thinking about the crucial elements of the medium of photography, the photo-theoretical concepts of time and memory have played an important role. This chapter moves again a bit further away from the basis of photography, but still addresses issues strongly related to the medium. In addition, the relationship between the photographs and time or memory is connected to the earlier chapters about light and straight photography, since the basis of all the chapters is the assumption of photography as a neutral and mechanical medium, related to reality. It was generally thought that the photograph is caused by its referent, and this idea is also crucial for the presence of memory and time in photography. Memory is often connected to real moments in life, and because of the assumption that the photograph reproduces subjects and objects of real life, which could be remembered, a relationship with the past and with memory seems to be possible at all.

Although the theoretical concept of time has been less present in the early theories of photography, than the concepts of light and straight photography, some theorists did address, implicitly or explicitly, the connection between time and photography. In the first years of photography, time was specifically related to technical aspects such as the shutter speed, since photography started as a slow medium. Photography has always been related to time in a literal sense, because of the importance of time for the technique. Moreover, from the early beginnings of photography, the concept of memory was present. Photography has been approached as a medium which could keep and preserve images of loved ones, for instance in a family album.⁸⁰ In 1939, philosopher and essayist Paul Valéry notes that “every family kept its album, one of those albums that allow us to revisit the past: portraits that we find touching in retrospect, apparel that now seems quaint, moments in time that have become such as they were, relatives, friends, and people we do not recognize, who played some essential or random role in our lives. In short, photography laid down a real pictorial record of the social life.”⁸¹ He both relates photography to time and memory, since he mentions that moments of time are frozen, which leads to the preservation of portraits of relatives. Therefore, the observer is able to revisit the past, and at the same time photography becomes a place of memory storage for the social life of people. In the 1970s, Susan Sontag additionally notes that through photographs people are able to follow how

⁸⁰ In the book *Forget me Not. Photography & Remembrance* (2004), Geoffrey Batchen investigates photographs in family albums and the concept of memory. In addition, Marianne Hirsch researches the relationship between family photography, memory and narrative in the book *Family Frames. Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (1997).

⁸¹ Valéry, 1980 [1939], 194.

people age in an intimate and troubling way. She states that “to look at an old photograph of oneself, of anyone one has known, or of a much photographed public person is to feel, first of all: how much younger I (she, he) was then. Photography is the inventory of mortality. A touch of the finger now suffices to invest a moment with posthumous irony.”⁸² Hence, memory seems to be connected to speculation and evocations, while time seems to be connected to an open window of the past. When time enters photography, one could think about what happened and what did not happen, what was and what is.

Photographer Walker Evans notes in 1931 that at a certain moment the element of time enters into photography, and that this provides “a departure for as much speculation as an observer cares to make”.⁸³ This is because there is according to Evans a difference between a strange evocation of the past and an open window looking straight back to some decades. Writer Carlo Rim notes in 1930 that on the day photography was born, “humanity won a precious victory over time, its most redoubtable enemy”.⁸⁴ Photographer Paul Strand notes in 1917 that the camera can hold a moment in a unique way and states that the camera has added the element of time to plastic expression. This focuses on the idea that a moment in time can be captured and frozen by the camera. In this sense, the camera freezes a moment in time, or even cuts this moment out of time.

Hence, time, memory and photography are indisputably connected to each other. However, the writings and ideas about the relationship between photography and time or memory do vary. Sometimes it is thought that photography contains more memory aspects than the memory itself, while others think that photography is lacking some aspects of memory. Some theorists focus on the idea that the observer could look back at the past, while others highlight the element of a frozen time. Most theories are related to the idea that one could observe what has happened or how somebody looked like in the past, which is closely connected to the idea of photography as a neutral and mechanical medium. Especially because photography is connected to ideas of nature and reality, this close connection with the past and memory seems to be possible at all. However, not every photograph seems to be connected to representations, the past or memories at first glance. How, then, could memory and time be related to the genre photograph by Polak and the photogram by Berssenbrugge? To answer this question, especially the book *Camera Lucida* by philosopher, semiotician and literary theorist Roland Barthes will take a central role, just as the book *On Photography* by Susan Sontag. These books are crucial for thinking about the relationship between photography, time and memory. Barthes highlights the idea that an observer can both experience the past and the future of the photograph at the same time,

⁸² Sontag, 2002 [1977], 70.

⁸³ Evans, 1980 [1931], 185.

⁸⁴ Rim, 1989 [1930], 38.

and notes that the photograph is always connected to death.⁸⁵ Sontag likewise suggests that photography slices out a moment in time and freezes this moment, and she relates the photograph to a certain form of nostalgia.⁸⁶ At first glance, the photogram by Henri Berssenbrugge does not seem to contain a sense of time and memory, since it only seems to consist of abstract lines and patterns created by light and objects. The photograph by Richard Polak on the other hand seems to contain a reference to a certain historical time, which is the seventeenth-century. When having a closer look, how could the two images be related to time and memory in photography, what are the differences, and what new insights does this perspective provide into the photographic nature of these pictures? Firstly, the genre photograph by Richard Polak will be related to the that-has-been by Barthes, and after that the photogram by Henri Berssenbrugge. Secondly, the two images will be related to the concepts of memory, echo and the perfect crime.

In his book *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes argues that one can never deny that the thing has really been there in photography, and that there is a superimposition of reality and the past. This refers to the already mentioned idea that photography is created by its referent, and that the medium is closely related to reality and the mechanical aspects. According to Barthes, the noeme or essence of photography is therefore the “that-has-been” or the intractable.⁸⁷ He describes that “what I see had been here, in this place which extends between infinity and the subject (operator or spectator); it has been here, and yet immediately separated; it has been absolutely, irrefutably present, and yet already deferred.”⁸⁸ These ideas focus especially on the impact the photographs could make on the observer, and focus less on the characteristics of the photograph or photographer itself. Barthes thus shows that when observing the photograph the observer both experiences an idea of the past and the future. This means that the observer experiences a person or object which was there at a specific moment, which is still there in the now, but also already faded into the past. Although most photographs presumably do contain some form of the past and the future as argued by Barthes, this is an assumption and not a fact.

This idea of observing the past and the future mainly comes from Barthes’s observation of a photograph made by Alexander Gardner in 1865 of the prisoner Lewis Payne, who was waiting for his own death (fig. 31). This photograph literally shows somebody who is still alive at the moment of the photograph, but the observer knows that some minutes or hours after the moment of the photograph, this person has passed away.

⁸⁵ Barthes, 2000 [1980], 77.

⁸⁶ Sontag, 2002 [1977], 15.

⁸⁷ Barthes, 2000 [1980], 77.

⁸⁸ Ibidem.

Lewis Payne is looking the observer directly into the eye, and it becomes clear in an almost uncanny way that this is a document of the past and the future. The idea of death and mortality thus also seems to be closely related to Barthes's theory of time. Barthes writes that he knows that the photographed man is going to die, but the man is still alive during the process of photographing and on the photograph, therefore Barthes experiences at the same time the idea of "this will be and this has been".⁸⁹ This means that the viewer of the photograph both experiences the moment in the past, when the man was still alive, and in the moment of observation, when the man already died, but is still alive on the photograph. As Barthes states "the photograph tells me death in the future".⁹⁰ Of course, not every photograph shows the nearing death as literally as in the photograph of Lewis Payne. However, even if the subject on the photograph is not dead or waiting to be killed, according to Barthes, "every photograph is this catastrophe", since there is always a defeat of time present, and one is always confronted with death and mortality.⁹¹ Time thus seems to be strongly connected to death, since the passing of time already reminds one of the fact that everyone is closer to their own death. The photograph of Lewis Payne maybe shows death more in the near future, but still according to Barthes every photograph of a person contains the same underlying assumption of mortality. Barthes's view especially seems to be connected to the concept of time, and the idea that various time zones are present during the observation of photography such as the past and the future. The idea of memory seems to be less directly connected to the that-has-been and the that-will-be, although at the same time memory always seems to be linked to events which happened in the past, and which could be kept and preserved.

At first glance, the genre photograph by Polak seems to contain the elements of that-has-been and that-will-be, since real adult people are depicted in a photograph, who once were alive and will be dead now. As Barthes notes, there cannot be denied that the thing, or the people have really been there. These people were photographed at that moment, were present in the studio and lived during that time, but at the same time this moment is already gone. However, the people depicted on the photograph by Polak cannot be defined as real people: they are actors and they are playing a role. They enter the studio and put on clothes which look like seventeenth-century clothes, they are photographed for one moment and after that moment, they transform into themselves again. Therefore, the people who are depicted on the photograph are not real, but they are a fantasy, or a play. The photographs are not preserved in family albums as a memory of loved ones. The referents on Polak's photographs thus do not refer to themselves, and to their own life and death. Although the

⁸⁹ Barthes, 2000 [1980], 96

⁹⁰ Ibidem.

⁹¹ Ibidem.

referents were really there in the sense that one cannot deny that the thing has been there, at the same time they were not.

Sontag notes in 1977 that “precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time’s relentless melt.”⁹² In Polak’s photograph there is no past and future, which makes it impossible to slice out a moment of time. Polak’s photograph seems to be an ultimate version of a frozen moment, especially because this frozen moment is not sliced out of time. The pre-photographic moment of staging could already be defined as the frozen moment, because the moment without a past and present is created there. Even before making the photograph, these depicted people were sliced out of life by playing a role. Because of the framing of the photograph by Polak, in which the studio is not visible, the referents seem to turn into objects. Polak framed the photograph in such a way, that it solely seems to be a seventeenth-century painting. Art critic John Berger notes that a photograph preserves a moment taken from a continuum, and that the camera records what has been seen, but refers to what has not been seen.⁹³ In the photograph by Polak, one cannot see the studio and the fact that these people are acting, but the idea that the studio is there, ensures that the referents are not experienced as real people. This means that the referents turn into an object or a thing themselves, without a past and a future: they are not experienced as a person anymore. The frozen moment, thus, takes place during the theatrical play, and during the creation of the photograph. The photograph by Polak moreover refers to another period in time, which is the seventeenth century. There is thus a certain past visible in the photograph, but not a past which is connected to reality in the sense of that-has-been, but a past which is connected to painterly representations of the seventeenth century.

It has become clear that on a first level it seems that the concepts of that-has-been and that-will-be are present in the photograph by Polak, because of the relationship with the referents. However, the depicted people do not have a real life themselves at that moment, since they are actors or models. Therefore, the referents seem to become things, or objects, without a past and a future. This could be related to the ultimate photographic moment, in which one moment is frozen, without containing a past and a future. In Polak’s photograph, this moment of frozen time is present twice, since the actors are already sliced out of life before the photograph is taken. In addition, the idea of the that-has-been is present when thinking about the reference to a seventeenth-century painting. This means that two different time zones are present in the photograph by Polak, in which the first one derives from the models itself and the other one from what the models represent. The photograph both refers to the photographic moment without a past and a future, as well as to the genre painting in

⁹² Sontag, 2002 [1977], 15.

⁹³ Berger, 1980 [1974], 293.

the seventeenth century and the eternity of paintings. Both ideas of time are not connected to the direct relationship between photography and reality. The first idea of time is connected to the theatre and the play, and the second idea to a seventeenth-century painting. Hence, because of the costumes and the studio, the depicted people are not observed as a reality with a past and a future, but are more observed as an ultimate photographic moment.

When observing the photogram created by Henri Berssenbrugge, it is at first sight harder to think about the presence of the that-has-been. This because there are no people or recognizable objects present, and there does not seem to be a confrontation with both the past and the future. One cannot look somebody in the eye, such as with the photograph of Lewis Payne, and think about the fact that this person has really lived and was alive during the moment of the creation of the photograph (fig. 31). Moreover, one cannot experience the idea that something is still going to happen, or that someone has lived and has passed away in the now. It seems that the idea of a referent, and with that the idea of mortality is not present in the photogram, because of the abstract forms. One could deny that the objects or people were there at that moment, since the objects or people are not literally depicted or present at all. As mentioned, the theory by Barthes is mainly related to photographs which have a referent and which refer to a certain reality. Since there does not seem to be a clear referent, one could suggest that the that-has-been and that-will-be are not present. In this way, the photogram by Berssenbrugge could be related to the photograph by Polak, because both images do not seem to contain a past and a future. The photogram by Berssenbrugge could likewise be observed as a frozen moment, as a photographic moment, without something which happened before that or something which happened after that. The photogram was created at that specific moment, and there was not a certain life before that or a life after that.

As mentioned, Barthes notes that one cannot deny that the thing has really been there. In this sense, the photogram by Berssenbrugge could contain a relationship with the that-has-been, because the photogram is a literal imprint of what has been there at that moment. The light sensitive material and the object itself even touched each other. In this sense, one cannot deny that the referent has been there, although the object is maybe not recognizable anymore. However, although the referent has really been there, there is still no past or future present. This means that the photograph could be defined as a representation of one frozen moment in time, without a past and a future.

In the images by Polak and Berssenbrugge, the idea of the past and the future are generally not present. Therefore, one could not speak of the terms of that-has-been and that-will-be by Barthes, in the sense of the referent. In the photograph by Polak, there is no past and future because the referents are not real, but are acting in a studio. In Berssenbrugge's image, there is no past and future, because there are no referents at all. This ultimate frozen

moment and the lack of a past and a future in both photographs could be related to the idea of a perfect crime, in which there are no traces left behind. The crime has been sliced out of the real, and there are no traces left in the past or the present which give any context. Jean Baudrillard relates the concept of the perfect crime to the murder of the real. He states that “were it not for the appearances, the world would be a perfect crime, a crime without a criminal, without a victim and without a motive. And the truth would forever have withdrawn from it and its secret would never be revealed, for want of any clues [*traces*] being left behind”.⁹⁴ In the photographs by Berssenbrugge and Polak, there are likewise no traces to the past and the future, since it is only about the specific moment on the photograph. The images could thus be defined as a perfect crime, without traces to a real world anymore. In addition, Baudrillard argues that a crime could never be perfect, because the nothing itself leaves traces.⁹⁵ This could be related to the idea that there is still always a certain connection with what was in front of the photographic lens or on the light sensitive paper at the moment when the photograph was taken. In addition, the relationship with historical painting techniques does not tell the viewer a lot about the past or the future of the photograph, because it is not referencing to a specific element. Both images are a perfect crime in the sense of a frozen moment without traces, although there will always be a certain trace to what was there at that moment. This means that both images could be defined as the ultimate form of the photographic moment, in which one specific moment is depicted, without the context of a past and a future. Since both photographs could be defined as a frozen moment, it seems that the photographs contain a certain relationship with mortality, the trace or memory. How, then, could both photographs be related to time in the sense of death and memories?

The photogram by Berssenbrugge seems to be connected to the process of memory, since it preserves what has been there at that moment in a literal way. Elizabeth Eastlake noted in 1857 that the process of the photographic drawing leaves behind the perfect trace.⁹⁶ The word trace refers to the fact that what has been there on the light sensitive paper was really there, since it is something which has been left behind. It is a sign which shows that something really happened or existed, and that an image of this thing has been left behind in the same spot. In addition, it seems to be a copy of something, since the trace is never the real object itself, but does refer to the real object. The trace seems to be connected to the idea of memory, since it is something which happened in the past and which is kept, preserved and already faded away. Fox Talbot describes the photogram as “the objects being removed from off the paper, were found to have left their images very perfectly and

⁹⁴ Baudrillard, 1996 [1995], 1.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁶ Eastlake, 1980 [1857] 44.

beautifully impressed or delineated upon it".⁹⁷ He uses the words impressed or delineated, which likewise refer to a perfect copy or a drawing, to something which has been left behind on exactly the same place.

Historian and art critic Franz Roh moreover notes that the photogram hovers between abstract geometrical tracery and the echo of objects.⁹⁸ He highlights the idea that a photogram contains traces and echoes, in which the traces seem to be related to abstract lines and the echoes more to the idea that a photogram is a mirror of light. An echo seems to be more a reflection, and it could refer to something which is similar to something else and therefore makes one remember something else. The photogram is an echo of objects, and therefore an echo of memories of these objects. Although the photograph by Polak does not contain this idea of a trace that was left behind on the light sensitive paper, the idea of an echo is present in his photograph. The photograph by Polak could namely be defined as an echo of a seventeenth-century painting. The photograph makes one remember of paintings of the seventeenth century, as well as of the historical medium of painting. This, while there is no literal trace present of the seventeenth century, and personal memories of the seventeenth century are not possible. Still, the observer is remembered of the seventeenth century, because of the references to the medium of painting. In addition, the photograph by Polak could be related to death and mortality, but not because the depicted people lived and died, but because the depicted people never lived and died. The people depicted on the photograph are less mortal, because they are also connected to a kind of timelessness one associates with painting. They seem to be painted models who do not exist in real life, but who are existing as a representation of the seventeenth century. This is thus another connection with mortality, than the idea by Barthes that the people live on after the creation of the photograph and have passed away at the moment of observing the photograph. Photographer Paul Strand notes in 1917 that a photograph leads to something memory cannot do itself, which is according to him capturing a moment.⁹⁹ In the photogram by Berssenbrugge this capturing of a moment seems to be literally present. The photogram is a storage place of traces and echoes, which were really there at a specific moment in time. In the photograph by Polak, this capturing of a moment is present in the sense that this moment refers back to another century and another medium.

Lastly, both images contain a stronger relationship with the passing of time and death, since they were created in the early twentieth century. Geoffrey Batchen notes that "for us today, these nineteenth-century images might even evoke another kind of memory – nostalgia. Involving an illogically warm feeling toward the past, a kind of pleasurable sadness

⁹⁷ Armstrong, 1998, 118.

⁹⁸ Roh, 1989 [1930], 159.

⁹⁹ Strand, 1980 [1917], 149.

(...).¹⁰⁰ There are no personal memories present anymore, because the photographs were created too long ago, but instead a feeling of nostalgia is created. Sontag emphasizes this element by stating that an older photograph would more likely move the viewer, because it is older, and she notes that “the particular qualities and intentions of photographs tend to be swallowed up in the generalized pathos of time’s past.”¹⁰¹ This would mean that the elements of death and mortality increase, when the photograph becomes older. The idea of time and memory in photography thus seems to be changing, because of the passing of time itself. Therefore, although the two images seem to be less literally connected to the death and mortality of the referents, the photograph still seems to contain the element of the passing of time and nostalgia, because of the aging of the photographs. Susan Sontag notes that photography actively promotes nostalgia, and she calls it a twilight art. Twilight could be defined as the light between full night and sunrise, or between sunset and full night, or as an intermediate state. She states that most photographed subjects are touched with pathos, just by being photographed.¹⁰² The images by Berssenbrugge and Polak could likewise be seen as a twilight art, since they are an intermediate state. On the one hand, both photographs are related to reality, while on the other hand both images do not contain a past and a future. It is one frozen moment in between two states. Still, this frozen moment could evoke memories, or nostalgia, because of the presence of the echo. Both photographs are referencing to other time periods, media, or traces of what has ever been there.

To conclude, both the photograph by Polak and the photogram by Berssenbrugge deviate from the idea of that-has-been and that-will-be in photography. This, because the two images do not consist of a certain past and the future. The photograph by Polak does not show real people with an own life, since the referents are actors, who become an object during the creation of the photograph. The photogram by Berssenbrugge does not contain a referent at all, and the objects are unrecognizable. This lacking of a past and a future could be related to the ultimate photographic moment, in which one specific moment is frozen. In family albums, the photographs also show a frozen moment, but this moment is still connected to a certain life. In the images by Polak and Berssenbrugge, these connections are not present, and were never present. However, there is still a certain idea of the past present in the two images, when relating the images to memories and echoes. Polak’s image reminds the viewer of a seventeenth-century painting and is an echo of the medium of painting. The photogram by Berssenbrugge could be defined as a keeper of traces or memories, because

¹⁰⁰ Batchen, 2004, 14.

¹⁰¹ Sontag, 2002 [1977], 21.

¹⁰² Ibid., 15.

of the direct relationship with what has touched the light sensitive paper. Lastly, the images contain a stronger relationship with the past and death, because they were created in the early twentieth century. Especially because the two photographs are photographs, it is expected that the concepts of that-has-been and that-will-be are present. However, these photographs do not contain this reference, which makes the connection with the fundamental photographic moment even stronger, since these photographs are radically frozen, without a past and a future. By moving to the core of the medium of photography, it becomes clear that these photographs come very close to the definition of a frozen moment, and that this frozen moment is already created in a pre-photographic stage. With this, both images differ from the idea of photography as a pencil of nature and a mechanical medium, and show that the photo-theoretical concepts of time and memory are blurring, and more varied than has been thought.

Conclusion

By moving to the core of the medium of photography, and by focusing on the fact that the two photographs by Berssenbrugge and Polak are specifically photographs, new perspectives have been uncovered concerning the Dutch photographs, the medium of photography and the photo-theoretical concepts of light, straight and composed photography, and time. Within the heart of the medium of photography, the borders of some of the photo-theoretical concepts are less strict than has been suggested before, and the boundaries are blurred. This thesis focused on the relationship between the photographs by Berssenbrugge and Polak, and the concepts of light, straight and composed photography, and time; and what new insights this provides into the blurred nature of some of these photo-theoretical concepts. The question was how the two photographs blurred the boundaries of what was thought to be inherent of the medium of photography, the pencil of nature, and photography as mechanical apparatus. In addition, it was questioned how the photographs could be read in a different perspective, than solely the focus on atmosphere, emotions, and the descriptive art historical categories of copying painting styles.

In the first chapter, it has become clear that both the selected photographs could be related to the concept of light on various levels, in which light is used in a direct and a constructed way, or in a first and secondary sense. Light is part of the photographic processes, as well as part of the representations. Both images are created in collaboration with light, by the presence of the photographer in the pre-photographic stage. The images are both related to light in the sense of the pencil of nature, as well as in the sense of hypermediacy, in which the observer is confronted with the medium of photography, as if it were a mirror. Therefore, light is not only present on the level of atmosphere and emotions, but is also inherently part of the medium of photography itself and used in the pre-photographic stage for the creation of the representations.

Moreover, in the second chapter, the photogram by Berssenbrugge was defined as more straight, while the photograph by Polak was defined as more composed, although they contain aspects of both categories. It became clear that the differences and boundaries between straight and composed photography are less strict, and that various combinations of the two are possible. Especially because the photographs are photographs, they are related to reality as well as manipulations at the same time. Some aspects are experienced as more real or false, but both categories could be defined as a hyperreal. Therefore, instead of only making a difference between purist and pictorialist photography, the hybrid photographs question the system of original, copy and uniqueness – although probably not intentionally by the photographers themselves – already in an early stage of the history of photography.

Furthermore, in the third chapter, it has become clear that both photographs do not contain a relationship with the that-has-been and the that-will-be, as defined by Barthes, since the photographs do not contain a past and a future. The images are the ultimate photographic moment, in which time is frozen, without a reference to a certain lived life, or a future. Therefore, the photographs could be related to the perfect crime. In contrast, the photographs are considered to be a keeper of echoes, in which the photogram by Berssenbrugge preserves traces of the real world, and the photograph by Polak reminds the observer of the seventeenth century, and the medium of painting. Instead of referring to a person who lived, was photographed and passed away, these photographs literally show the specific quality of the medium of photography to slice out a certain moment of life.

By discussing the photograph by Polak and the photogram by Berssenbrugge, it is shown that these Dutch photographs contain more elements, than solely characteristics related to descriptions of atmosphere, emotions, and reproductions of painting styles. Because the photographs are photographs, light is an indisputable part of the medium as well as of the representations, which results in the blurring of the discussed photo-theoretical concepts. This blurring of the boundaries is likewise present since the medium is manipulated as well as related to reality, and since the images are an extreme form of a decontextualized frozen moment. In addition, the two photographs cannot be solely defined as a medium which is connected to the reality, to the apparatus and to the pencil of nature. This research shows, that on the one hand the medium of photography should not be ignored, and that on the other hand this medium and the photo-theoretical concepts which are connected to it are more blurred than has been thought. The photographers are not just reproducing painting styles, but the medium of photography itself has become more hybrid, as a result of the experiments originating from the goal to make the medium of photography equal to the medium of painting. This shines a new light and shows a new perspective on Dutch photography from the early twentieth century, by emphasizing the fact that the medium of photography is always present as well as versatile.

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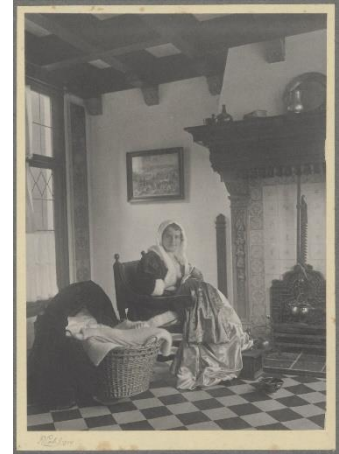


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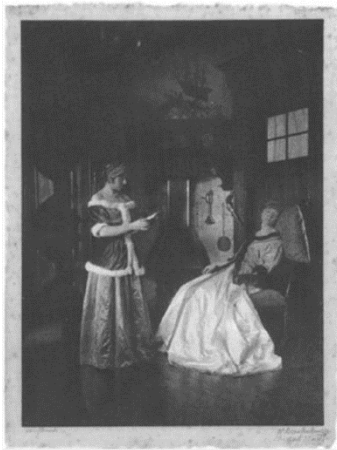


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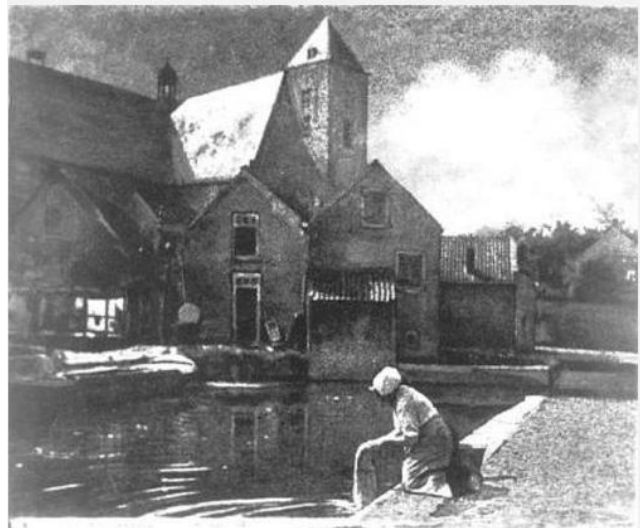


Figure 8: Henri Berssenbrugge, no title, gum bichromate print, 23,9 x 17,9 cm, ca. 1900-1920. Leiden University Library, inv. no. PK-F-B.182.

Figure 9: Henri Berssenbrugge, *Oud Naaldwijk*, gum bichromate print, 24,3 x 31,7 cm, 1921. Leiden University Library, inv. no. PK-F-G.73.



Figure 10: see figure 2.

Figure 11: Henri Berssenbrugge, no title, gelatin silver print, 28,8 x 22,1 cm, 1920-1930. Leiden University Library, inv. no. PK-F-53.430.

Figure 12: Henri Berssenbrugge, no title, gelatin silver print, 23,9 x 17,9 cm, 1920-1930. Leiden University Library, inv. no. PK-F-B.1870.

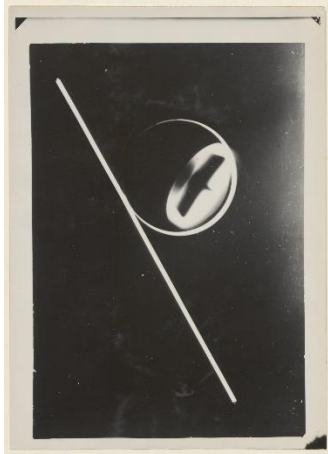


Figure 13: Piet Zwart, no title, gelatin silver print, 16 x 11 cm, ca. 1930. Leiden University Library, inv. no. PK-F-PZ.242.

Figure 14: Man Ray, no title, gelatin silver print, 23.9 x 17.8 cm, 1922. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 1987.1100.42.

Figure 15: László Moholy-Nagy, no title, gelatin silver print, 23.9 x 17.9 cm, 1926. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 1987.1100.158.

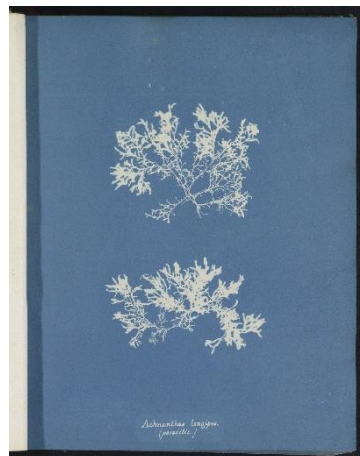


Figure 16: William Henry Fox Talbot, *Wrack*, salt print, 22 x 17,5 cm, 1839. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. no. 36.37 (25).

Figure 17: Anna Atkins, *Achnanthes longipes (parasitic)*, cyanotype, 25 x 20 cm, ca. 1843-1853. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. no. RP-F-2016-133-1.



Figure 18: see figure 2.

Figure 19: Robert Delaunay, *Circular Forms*, oil on canvas, 128,9 x 194,9 cm, 1930. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, inv. no. 49.1184.



Figure 20: see figure 1.

Figure 21: Johannes Vermeer, *Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window*, oil on canvas, 83 x 64,5 cm, 1657/59. Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden, inv. no. Gal.-Nr. 1336.

Figure 22: Johannes Vermeer, *Woman Reading a Letter*, oil on canvas, 46,5 x 39 cm, 1663. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. no. SK-C-251.



Figure 23: see figure 1.

Figure 24: Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *The Supper at Emmaus*, oil and tempera on canvas, 141 x 196,2 cm, 1601. The National Gallery, London, inv. no. NG172.

Figure 25: Rembrandt van Rijn, *De Staalmeesters*, oil on canvas, 191,5 cm x 279 cm, 1662. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. no. SK-C-6.



Figure 26: Hiroshi Sugimoto, *The Music Lesson*, pigment print, 134,9 x 106 cm, 1999. Online source: www.phillips.com/detail/HIROSHI-SUGIMOTO/NY040114/63.

Figure 27: Hiroshi Sugimoto, *The Music Lesson*, gelatin silver print, 148,9 x 118,9 cm, 1999. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, inv. no. 2005.110.

Figure 28: Johannes Vermeer, *Lady at the Virginals with a Gentleman (The Music Lesson)*, oil on canvas, 74.1 x 64.6 cm, 1662-1665. Royal Collection Trust, London, inv. no. RCIN 405346.



Figure 29: photographer unknown, *Fotoreproductie Schilderij Vrouw met waterkan door Johannes Vermeer*, albumen print, 39,2 cm x 34,7 cm, ca. 1890-1910. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. no. RP-F-00-596.



Figure 30: Julia Margaret Cameron, no title, albumen print, 35,3 x 28,1 cm, 1866. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, inv. no. 944-1913.

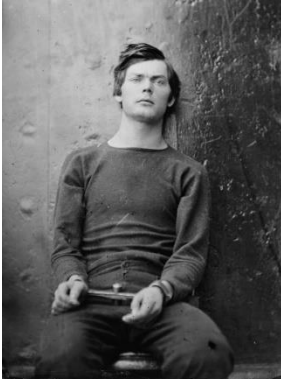


Figure 31: Alexander Gardner, *Portrait of Lewis Payne*, albumen print, size unknown, 1865.

Online source:

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewis_Powell_\(conspirator\)#/media/File:Lewis_Payne_cwpb.04208_\(cropped\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewis_Powell_(conspirator)#/media/File:Lewis_Payne_cwpb.04208_(cropped).jpg)

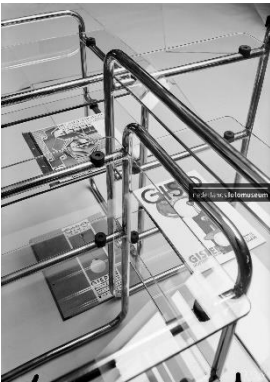


Figure 32: Paul Schuitema, *Stalen buismeubilair van Gispen*, negative, size unknown, 1930.

Nederlands Fotomuseum, Rotterdam, inv. no. PAS-884.