

# “The Analogue”: Conceptual Connotations of a Historical Medium

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## Abstract

This essay considers how a number of artworks mobilize what is tentatively termed “the analogue.” “The analogue” highlights artistic practices that implicitly or explicitly evoke themes and concepts associated with analogue photography. The essay argues that the so-called digital turn opens the possibility of tapping into analogue photography as a conceptual and cultural sensitivity distinguishable from the technique. It is the discourse of analogue photography that is key, not the technological process itself—therefore “the analogue” can be evoked also in works that are produced digitally. The essay explores how “the analogue” can be a productive way of analyzing specific artworks by artists such as Lotta Antonsson, Brian Ganter, Joachim Koester, Zoe Leonard, Vera Lutter, Joel Sternfeld, and Akram Zaatari. Contemporary artworks located within a postconceptual tradition can be said to have a built-in self-reflexive relationship to medium whereby the method and technique of production are always intimately intertwined with the artwork’s content and meaning. With that in mind, this paper shows how the selected artworks can be analyzed precisely in terms of this interplay between medium as technique and medium as concept and content. The essay adapts and modifies the analytical tools of intermediality to fit the specific conditions of contemporary photographic practices among artists, and shows that the artists considered in the text evoke both the documentary, evidentiary connotations of the medium and the more associative,

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material, and mystical implications. The essay is a first attempt to put “the analogue” to work as an intermedial concept to analyze how meaning is generated in a specific subset of photographic practices among contemporary artists.

*Damaged Negatives: Scratched Portrait of Mrs. Baqari* (1959/2012), by Akram Zaatari, shows a young woman posing self-confidently in a photographer’s studio in 1950s Lebanon (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> The accompanying text provides the back story of the picture: the depicted woman’s habit of visiting Hashem El Madani’s studio in Saida stopped when she got married, and her jealous husband insisted that all negatives of her be destroyed.<sup>2</sup> El Madani refused; they were part of rolls of 35 mm film, and removing them would affect adjacent negatives. A compromise was reached whereby the woman’s face was scratched with a pin—preserving the negatives yet making them unusable as a source for future copies. A few years later the husband returned to El Madani’s studio asking for prints to be made from the damaged negatives; his wife had by then taken her own life, presumably because of his abusive behavior.

This essay considers a number of artworks that mobilize what I tentatively call “the analogue.” With this term I wish to highlight artistic practices that implicitly or explicitly evoke themes and concepts associated with analogue photography. A basic assumption is that the focus on a number of thematic concerns that are at the heart of “the analogue” only becomes possible when these bump up against, or are perceived to be challenged by, digital photography.<sup>3</sup> This essay specifically pinpoints artistic concerns

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<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank the participants of the workshop held at Stockholm University on November 10–11, 2016 for valuable comments on an earlier version of this text.

<sup>2</sup> Moderna Museet, *Akram Zaatari Unfolding* (Moderna Museet Exhibition Folder, 2015), 4.

<sup>3</sup> The argument is that the notion of analogue only comes to the fore after the advent of digital media, prior to this, analogue photography was simply “photography.” However, it is worth bearing in mind that this pre-digital photography consisted of a whole range of different techniques and was far from a homogenous medium either. See for instance Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge: MIT



**Figure 1.** *Damaged Negatives: Scratched Portrait of Mrs. Baqari.* Akram Zaatari, 2012. Inkjet print, framed. Made from 35 mm scratched negative from the Hashem el Madani archive. Copyright: Akram Zaatari. Courtesy of Thomas Dane Gallery, London. License: CC-BY-NC-ND.

with material fragility and decay; temporal layering; reproduction, originality, and manipulation; issues relating to vision and (in) visibility; and the death of the medium itself. Zaatari's *Damaged Negatives: Scratched Portrait of Mrs. Baqari* can be considered in terms of all of these thematic associations of “the analogue.”

It is important to stress that although the thematic cluster of “the analogue” is far from independent of technique, nor is it entirely constrained by it. It is the discourse of analogue photography that is key, not the technological process itself—in fact, I suggest that

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Press, 1999), 50ff; Kaja Silverman, *The Miracle of Analogy, Or, the History of Photography* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 13ff, 39ff.

“the analogue” can be evoked also in works that are produced digitally.

The essay focuses on contemporary artistic uses of photography. Meaning is generated in specific ways in these works; ways that differ from other photographic practices because of the self-reflexive, conceptual basis of post-1960s art production. An important question is thus whether intermedial analysis can be adapted to these particular meaning-generating conditions, and if so how? The current essay answers the first question in the affirmative and, via a number of case studies, shows how these practices can be analyzed in terms of a particular notion of intermedial juxtaposition and movement. The notion of “the analogue” allows for disassociating the medium from its technical considerations and instead considering it in terms of its thematic associations. The artistic practices examined here can be termed postconceptual or neoconceptual art, which points to the way they operate within a logic of a discursive art notion.<sup>4</sup> In line with this, “the analogue” as an instance of intermediality is approached as a *conceptual* tool.

The essay is divided into two main parts. The first discusses how “the analogue” as a conceptual category can be considered in relation to the photographic medium and the wider context of intermedial analysis. It also outlines some perceived characteristics of analogue photography as it is contrasted with digital. In

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<sup>4</sup> In *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, Peter Osborne suggested that “contemporary art is postconceptual art.” What he means by “postconceptual art” is specified as “a critical category that is constituted at the level of the historical ontology of the artwork; it is not a traditional art-historical or art-critical concept at the level of medium, form, or style”. Peter Osborne, *Anywhere Or Not At All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art* (London and New York: Verso, 2013), 3, 48.

For a discussion of some issues with the prefix “post” in this context, see Dan Karlholm, “After Contemporary Art: Actualization and Anachrony,” *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics*, no. 51 (2016): 35–54. See also James Meyer, “Nostalgia and Memory: Legacies of the 1960s in Recent Work,” in *Painting, Object, Film, Concept: Works from the Herbig Collection*, ed. Scott Burton (New York: Christie’s, 1998), 30; and Terry Smith, “One and Three Ideas: Conceptualism Before, During and After Conceptual Art,” *e-flux journal* #29 (November 2011): unpaginated.

the second part, “the analogue” as a conceptual category is put to work. Here, five thematic concerns that stem from the perceived difference between analogue and digital photography are fleshed out and considered in relation to particular artistic practices.

## “The Analogue,” Intermediality, and the Perceived Characteristics of Digital and Analogue Media

### Postconceptual Art and Photography as Medium

It hardly needs stating that all media come with a set of connotations, and that the medium used in an artwork affects how it is interpreted.<sup>5</sup> What I propose here is to open up the heuristic potential of intermediality by analyzing the perceived characteristics of a given medium, detachable from the technical specificities of this medium.

Before doing so, however, it is important to clarify the meaning of the term *medium* itself. In media theory, the notion is broken down in a number of different ways: Lars Elleström makes the distinction between *technical*, *basic* and *qualified media*, the latter being socially shaped media like art forms that are dependent on “ever-shifting qualifying aspects.”<sup>6</sup> The qualifying aspects can be further divided into two main categories: the *contextual qualifying aspect*, including origin and use of media in specific historical, cultural, and social circumstances; and the *operational qualifying*

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<sup>5</sup> The term “connotation” that appears in the title and throughout this essay is not used in a strict linguistic or semiotic sense but rather in a more colloquial one, roughly synonymous with “association.” This colloquial use of connotation is defined by *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary* as: “that which is implied by a word etc. in addition to its literal or primary meaning.” Joyce Hawkins and R. E. Allen, eds., *The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 309.

<sup>6</sup> Basic media for example would be visual still images, technical media are what mediate, or display, the content of media products such as screens or book pages. Lars Elleström, “Photography and Intermediality: Analytical Perspectives on Notions Referred to by the Term ‘Photography,’” *Semiotica* 197 (2013): 160.

*aspect*, including aesthetic and communicative characteristics.<sup>7</sup> According to Elleström, photography has been qualified operationally in two main ways: photography as documentation, tied to indexicality, and photography as art, which “foregrounds how photographs look rather than how they were created.”<sup>8</sup> Elleström’s distinction between documentary/aesthetic, epistemological/visual is useful for the analysis of many photographic documents. It is useful too when considering contemporary artistic use of photography, precisely because here the distinction breaks down, and it therefore clarifies a number of issues about how these works generate meaning. The works considered in this essay are all steeped in what may be termed a postconceptual tradition whereby an artwork is defined discursively, and the medium in these works is therefore both the medium of photography in a technical-material sense, and photography theorized in a particular way.<sup>9</sup> Irina O. Rajewsky points out that we never encounter “the medium” (photography) as such, only specific instances of it (individual photographs), and she refers to the latter by the term “medial configurations.” Rajewsky argues that referring to “a medium” or “individual media” ultimately refers to a theoretical construct. It is therefore important to stress that this essay operates with different levels of media: the photographic practices that I analyze are “medial configurations,” and I posit “the analogue” as a medium in the sense of a theoretical construct that is mobilized as conceptual content in the artworks. What is of key importance here is the relationship between these different levels, or types of media notions, and that concept and meaning in postconceptual art are necessarily intertwined with process, technique, and material.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Elleström, “Photography and Intermediality,” 160, 164.

<sup>8</sup> Elleström, “Photography and Intermediality,” 166.

<sup>9</sup> For more on contemporary art as postconceptual art, see Osborne, *Anywhere Or Not At All*, 48.

<sup>10</sup> Irina O. Rajewsky, “Border Talks: The Problematic Status of Media Borders in the Current Debate about Intermediality,” in *Media Borders, Multimodality and Intermediality*, ed. Lars Elleström (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 53–54.

### The Use of Intermediality as an Analytic Tool

My proposal is that intermediality can be used to serve different heuristic purposes when it is used to analyze these postconceptual photographic artworks.<sup>11</sup> Whereas textbook trans- and intermedial analyses highlight the way a phenomenon or image moves between media or exists across different media (such as opera combining music and literature, or a movie adapted from a novel) my concern is rather with the way qualities associated with the material and technical specificities of one medium (chemical photography) are migrating not to other media but to the content of the artwork.<sup>12</sup> In the case of “the analogue” it makes no sense to speak of one medium referring to another medium, but rather that an artwork done in one kind of “technical medium” (to use Elleström’s term) references medium understood as a set of associations. My suggestion is thus that the notion of “the analogue” offers a useful way of thinking about media in terms of ontological and conceptual possibilities, by focusing not on what it means to shift from one medium to another, but what it means to evoke a medium as conceptual content.<sup>13</sup> If intermedial analysis

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<sup>11</sup> Irina O. Rajewsky, “Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality,” *Intermedialités* 6 (Automne 2005): 47.

<sup>12</sup> Rajewsky for instance defines intermediality as “relations between media, to medial interactions and interferences” and states that the term can be applied to any phenomenon that involves more than one medium or that takes place between media. Rajewsky, “Border Talks,” 51–52.

<sup>13</sup> Johanna Zylinska writes of a distinction between “affect” and “technology” in her discussion of digitization, and this distinction overlaps somewhat with what I discuss here. The difference between her argument and mine hinges on the crucial element of relating a photographic work to the discursive system of contemporary art where theory and text are integral parts of the artwork. The current text does not provide me with an opportunity to develop this further, suffice to note that W. J. T. Mitchell’s discussion of artworks as always in some ways text-based is relevant in the way I consider conceptual and postconceptual use of photography as highly contingent not just on photography theory but also on the institutional theory of art. I thus suggest that “the analogue” can be a tool to understand the special case of intermediality at work in these kinds of photographic practices. Joanna Zylinska, “On Bad Archives, Unruly Snappers and Liquid Photographs,” *Photographies* 3, no. 2 (September

is the method of analyzing relations between media, the mode proposed here does not just consider the relation between old and new media, but specifically the way these are used as already theorized media-conceptual clusters in a specific set of photographic practices at the turn of the twenty-first century.

### The Analogue/Digital Binary

So, what are the perceived differences between analogue and digital photography that are mobilized in “the analogue”? Martin Lister summarizes the distinction between analogue and digital media via four binaries.<sup>14</sup> Analogue media can be said to store information through a *transcription* where one physical material is configured into an analogous arrangement in another material—a human face is transcribed to lines on a paper in a drawing, or by chemical transcription onto the photographic emulsion of the prepared photographic surface. Digital media on the other hand, *converts* the physical properties of the portrayed face into a numerical code of zeros and ones. In analogue media, representation occurs through variations in a *continuous* field whereas in digital media this is *unitized*; that is to say, divided into discrete, measurable and exactly reproducible elements. Furthermore, if analogue media record via *material inscription* where signs are inseparable from the surface that carries them, digital media is made up of *abstract signals* in a way that makes the numbers or electronic pulses detachable from the material source on which they are stored. This digital conversion of an object or event into zeroes and ones means that the digital medium can be used and

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2010); 140. W. J. T. Mitchell, “There Are No Visual Media,” *Journal of Visual Culture* 4, no. 2 (2005): 257–266.

<sup>14</sup> The outline of these binaries is taken directly from Lister’s text. Martin Lister, “Photography in the Age of Electronic Imaging,” in *Photography: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Liz Wells (London: Routledge, 2009), 314ff. See also Martin Lister, ed., *The Photographic Image in Digital Culture*, (London; New York: Routledge, 1995). For a discussion of the terminology of the analogue, see also Jonathan Sterne, “Analog,” in *Digital Keywords: A Vocabulary of Information Society and Culture*, ed. Benjamin Peters, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 31–44.

reused in a range of different formats, it is *generic* rather than *medium-specific* and can travel freely between different platforms. For instance, a music file can generate a graphic visual pattern and vice versa.<sup>15</sup> Lev Manovich rightly points out that in daily use we do not approach digital photography in a significantly different way than we do analogue.<sup>16</sup> My focus here, however, is not on the way we use digital photography in our daily lives, but rather how artists use photography in conceptually deliberate ways.

### Truth Claims

Writing by Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag, and Rosalind Krauss are key entries in what has been termed the “narrow bibliographies” of contemporary photography theorists, and have contributed to make indexicality a perceived key feature of how photography operates.<sup>17</sup> The notion is grounded in the evocation of semiotician C. S. Peirce who wrote of photographs: “in certain respects they are exactly like the objects they represent” because they are “physically forced to correspond point by point to nature.”<sup>18</sup> This

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<sup>15</sup> Worth noting too, is that digital is not homogenous grouping either but rather historically changeable: what it connotes is very different today than in the 1990s. For a discussion of the problems with a simplified understanding of digital media, see for instance, Marlene Manoff, “The Materiality of Digital Collections: Theoretical and Historical Perspectives,” *Libraries and the Academy* 6, no. 3 (July 2006): 311–325; Marlene Manoff, “Unintended Consequences: New Materialist Perspectives on Library Technologies and the Digital Record,” *Libraries and the Academy* 13, no. 3 (July 2013): 273–282.

<sup>16</sup> “Lev Manovich | Essays : The Paradoxes of Digital Photography,” accessed September 13, 2012, [http://www.manovich.net/TEXT/digital\\_photo.html](http://www.manovich.net/TEXT/digital_photo.html).

<sup>17</sup> This notion of “narrow bibliographies” is taken from Jan Baetens, who suggest that “we all quote the same authors.” James Elkins, ed., “The Art Seminar,” in *Photography Theory*, The Art Seminar 2 (New York: Routledge, 2007), 172. One can argue that the round-table discussion where this is said has now itself become part of a slightly more extended bibliography, as this text is frequently referenced in newer texts on photographic theory. See for instance Nina Lager Vestberg, “Archival Value,” *Photographies* 1, no. 1 (2008): 53.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics: The Basics* (London: Routledge, 2003), 42.

is taken to mean that the negative simply cannot help but capture what is in front of the camera; an idea that is echoed in Barthes' formulation that "in Photography, I can never deny that the thing has been there" and in Sontag's understanding of the photograph as a trace directly stenciled off reality like a footprint or a death mask.<sup>19</sup> A wide range of objections can be made against the strict indexical identification of the photograph. Peirce himself stressed that all signs are mixed and include elements of index, icon, and symbol; and many have pointed out that there is as much convention involved in creating photographic images as there are in other forms of representation.<sup>20</sup> In fact, some have argued that the notion of index was not conceptually attached to early photographic practices, but rather gains traction via art-historical discussions of photography in a postmodern context.<sup>21</sup> Despite this, it has, as James Elkins points out, proved very hard indeed to "cut off all the heads of the hydra of indexicality."<sup>22</sup> Elkins has also convincingly argued that the art-historical use of Peirce

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<sup>19</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (London: Vintage, 2000), 76. Susan Sontag, "The Image-World," in *On Photography* (New York: Dell Pub. Co., 1977), 154.

<sup>20</sup> Photographer Garry Winogrand suggests as much in his often-cited explanation for why he takes pictures: "I photograph to find out what something will look like photographed." Cited in Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 272.

<sup>21</sup> Kaja Silverman argues that index is not key to early photography at all, see Silverman, *The Miracle of Analogy*. Margaret Iversen suggests that the discussion of the index arises in a specific art-historical context that is concerned with the simulacrum. In the same round-table discussion, Jan Baetens attempts to historicize the discourse on indexicality and suggests that the focus on index is a specifically *art-historical* obsession. Jan Baetens et al., "The Art Seminar," in *Photography Theory*, ed. James Elkins, *The Art Seminar 2* (New York and London: Routledge, 2007), 132, 143, 173. Similarly Kate Palmer Albers, among others, highlights Rosalind Krauss as the instigator of this art-historical interest in the index. Kate Palmer Albers, *Uncertain Histories: Accumulation, Inaccessibility, and Doubt in Contemporary Photography* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 115–116.

<sup>22</sup> Baetens et al., "The Art Seminar," 146. Nina Lager Vestberg points out that "The Art Seminar itself dedicates more than a third of its transcribed discussion to the index. Lager Vestberg, "Archival Value," 53.

is superficial at best and at worst misleading, as it is based on reflexive references to the same few lines—the ones that I cited above—thereby isolating a small portion of Peirce’s complex system of thought.<sup>23</sup> Again, what is important here is not whether the photograph is an indexical sign or not, only that it has persistently been theorized as such and that indexicality is considered stronger in analogue than in digitally produced image—mainly because of the way the former contain a material trace of the depicted subject in its chemical emulsion.<sup>24</sup>

The notion of photographic indexicality is strongly connected to the perceived truth claims of the photographic image. Geoffrey Batchen wrote in 1994 about “two related anxieties” that plagued discussions of photography at that time. The first relates specifically to the way digital images can be passed off as real photographs, and the fear that this will lead to doubt in “photography’s ability to deliver objective truth.”<sup>25</sup> Although manipulation is in no way alien to analogue photography, the digital medium enables a kind of re-touching perceived as traceless as pixels can simply be added or removed directly in the digital file.<sup>26</sup> I will outline Batchen’s second anxiety shortly, but let me first consider the mystical and temporal structures and implications of the photographic document.

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<sup>23</sup> James Elkins, “What Does Peirce’s Sign Theory Have to Say to Art History?,” *Culture, Theory & Critique* 44, no. 1 (2003): 5–22.

<sup>24</sup> I am deliberately leaving aside the fact that digital photography is also materially based in the sense of being captured by cameras, and that the conversion of the image into zeroes and ones takes place on physical circuit boards. See Manoff, “The Materiality of Digital Collections: Theoretical and Historical Perspectives.” However, although digital media are not in any real sense immaterial, the image is not materially inscribed in the same way that it is in an analogue photograph.

<sup>25</sup> Geoffrey Batchen, “Phantasm: Digital Imaging and the Death of Photography,” *Aperture* 136 (1994): 47.

<sup>26</sup> Batchen writes that with the advent of digital imagery photography is openly and overtly fictional: “digitization abandons even the rhetoric of truth” present in the language of analogue photography. Batchen, “Phantasm,” 48.

## The Unphotographable

Barthes' notion of *punctum* is arguably the most persistent trope of photography after that of the index. Barthes himself explains the difference between the two elements of a photograph by stating that *studium* is ultimately always coded, whereas *punctum* is not.<sup>27</sup> Using the example of an 1865 photograph of a young man about to be executed, he explains that the quality of the photograph and the handsomeness of the boy is the photograph's *studium*, whereas "the *punctum* is: *he is going to die.*"<sup>28</sup> Photographers since the medium's earliest history have been concerned not only with capturing the visible world but also that which is not so readily seen, such as thought, time, ghosts, and dreams.<sup>29</sup> Photography is thus frequently concerned with photographing the "unphotographable," and a 2013 exhibition with that title included images ranging from mysterious double-exposures to photographs of shadows, auras, a levitating table, an empty mirror, mental pictures, photographs of photographic film, and much more.<sup>30</sup> The photographic image is perceived of as a stencil and identical copy of the visible world (a truthful witness), yet it is also considered capable of showing that which is beyond the visible. Although a digital photograph can also capture the invisible, several differences between analogue and digital media contribute to the former being more closely associated with mystical elements. First of all, the chemical process of analogue photography has been discussed as "alive" in a way that invites these kinds of associations. Barthes writes: "the loved body is immortalized by the mediation of a precious metal, silver (monument and luxury); to which we might add the notion

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<sup>27</sup> Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 51.

<sup>28</sup> Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 96.

<sup>29</sup> Jeffrey Fraenkel and Frish Brandt, eds., *The Unphotographable* (San Francisco and New York: Fraenkel Gallery: Distributed Art Publishers, 2013): unpaginated. W. J. T. Mitchell also writes about how photography shows us what we cannot see with the naked eye. Mitchell, "There Are No Visual Media," 260.

<sup>30</sup> Fraenkel and Brandt, *The Unphotographable*. The interest in the invisible or mystical that I am getting at here is a great deal wider than Barthes' notion of *punctum*, although connects to it in numerous ways. Barthes points to it being beyond the visible by referring to it as a "blind field." Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 57.

that this metal, like all the metals of Alchemy, is alive.” What is alive is unpredictable in a way that mathematically based digital photography is not.<sup>31</sup> Another but related reason has to do with the time it takes to reveal the analogue photograph compared to the instantly viewed digital image on the camera’s built-in LCD screen. This temporal gap means that the photographer is arguably more likely to discover something captured on the negative other than what was intended at the moment of shooting it.

### Original and Copies

Analogue and digital media are also perceived to differ in the relationship between original and copies. The second anxiety mentioned by Geoffrey Batchen is grounded in “the pervasive suspicion that we are entering a time when it is no longer possible to tell *any* instance of reality from its simulations.”<sup>32</sup> Bringing in the distinction between token and type, Timothy Binkley suggests that each copy of a digital photograph relates to the “original” file more like the same numbers relate to one another than the way a copy of an analogue image relates to the original negative.<sup>33</sup> Walter Benjamin’s argument about copies and originals in his 1936 essay, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”—another entry in the “narrow bibliography” of photography theory—today seems to fit more closely with the way digital photography is discussed than the chemical photographic practices that Benjamin in fact refers to.<sup>34</sup> When contrasted with digital photography, each analogue print created by mechanical reproduction no longer seems identical to one another, and because

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<sup>31</sup> Notably, however, there are digital photographic practices that attempt to add elements of unpredictability to images, see for instance Vendela Grundell, *Flow and Friction: On the Tactical Potential of Interfacing with Glitch Art* (PhD diss., Stockholm: Art and Theory, 2016).

<sup>32</sup> Batchen, “Phantasm,” 47. Italics in the original.

<sup>33</sup> Timothy Binkley, “Refiguring Culture,” in *Future in Visions: New Technologies of the Screen*, eds. Philip Hayward and Tana Wollen (London: BFI, 1993), 79–80, 97.

<sup>34</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 217–251.

of this shift analogue photography may be particularly suited to themes of uniqueness and authenticity.<sup>35</sup> It is worth noting that Batchen's two anxieties are brought up in relation to the notion that photography is dead or dying because of the advent of digital photography. Batchen himself relates this to the way painting was considered to be moribund with the advent of analogue photography in the mid-nineteenth century, and when compared to painting the new medium seemed un-auratic. Meditation on the implications of the death of the medium of analogue photography is, I argue, itself part of "the analogue."

### "The Analogue"

"The analogue" as outlined here is a conceptually dense set of connotations that come to be sharpened in the mid-1990s with the proliferation of digital media. Lisa Gitelman describes how one of the chapters in her 2014 book *Paper Knowledge* attempts to answer the question "[w]hat did photocopied documents mean—on their own terms—before the digital media that now frames them as old or analog?"<sup>36</sup> The notion of "the analogue" is intended to do the opposite of Gitelman's endeavor: to consider what analogue photography comes to mean precisely when it *is* framed by digital photography. Mark Godfrey in his 2007 article "The Artist as Historian" acknowledges that digital media may indeed impact the themes taken on by contemporary photographers, and

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<sup>35</sup> Claire Bishop suggests that the artistic focus on analogue media is potentially detrimental to the relevance of visual art in the future, because it is motivated by the commercial viability of the unique art object, as challenged by infinitely reproducible digital images. See Claire Bishop, "Digital Divide: Contemporary Art and New Media," *Artforum* 51, no. 1 (September 2012): 441. I am not denying that commercial reasons may be part of the clinging to analogue media in some cases, my focus in this paper however, is on the function of "the analogue" as a conceptual category, and how its heuristic potential can be understood.

<sup>36</sup> Lisa Gitelman, *Paper Knowledge: Toward a Media History of Documents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 15. Here the different spellings of the term analogue stand out sharply; I have throughout this essay opted to use the British English spelling "analogue," rather than the US spelling "analog."

that “perhaps it is the approaching digitalization of all photographic mediums that sensitizes artists to the way in which such mediums used to serve as records of the past—and this sensitivity provokes artists to make work *about* the past.”<sup>37</sup> Godfrey’s idea of artists being “sensitized” to certain thematic concerns because of the advent of digital media is close to the argument I develop in this essay. I highlight specific elements of the interests artists are concerned with when engaging with “the analogue,” and these include, but are not strictly limited to, making work that thematically references the past. In her 2012 essay “Digital Divide: Contemporary Art and New Media,” Claire Bishop approaches the issue from a different set of questions, and she expresses surprise that contemporary artists do not deeply engage with digital technology, noting that the most prevalent trends in contemporary art since the late ’90s all eschew the digital and the virtual.<sup>38</sup> For Bishop it is clear, however, that the “operational logic” of these practices is tied to digital technology as “the shaping condition,” the “structuring paradox” and a “subterranean presence” that determine artistic decisions to work with certain formats and media.<sup>39</sup> Although my essay is less interested in answering the question why digital media is *not* thematized in contemporary art and more focused on considering the *ways in which* the analogue *is*, Bishop’s suggestion that the digital is the shaping condition of these practices resonates strongly. The current text can be said to begin in the same observation as Bishop’s but attempts to investigate the phenomenon from a different angle.

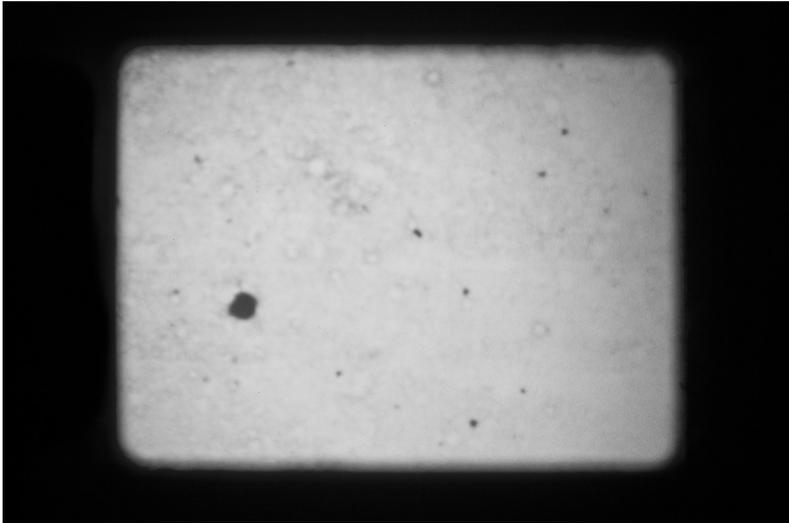
The “hydra of indexicality” runs through the notion of “the analogue” but rather than fully identifying it with the somewhat blunt notion of the index, I wish instead to focus on five specific thematic clusters that a number of artworks appear to be mobilizing, and it is to these that I now turn.

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<sup>37</sup> Mark Godfrey, “The Artist as Historian,” *October* 120 (Spring 2007): 146. Italics in the original.

<sup>38</sup> Bishop, “Digital Divide.”

<sup>39</sup> Bishop, “Digital Divide,” 436.



**Figure 2.** *Message from Andrée*. Joachim Koester, 2005. 16 mm film animation. Copyright: Jocahim Koester. Courtesy of Jan Mot, Brussels and Gallery Nicolai Wallner, Copenhagen. License: CC-BY-NC-ND.

## “The Analogue” Put to Work

### The Materiality of “the Analogue” and Its Associations to the Human Body

Artists point to the underlying material processes beneath the photographic image in a number of ways; in what follows I focus specifically on the way the fragility of the material substrate makes it analogous to the human body.<sup>40</sup>

The unfixed photograph and associations to the death of the human body is brought up by Brian Ganter’s series *Kiss, Stroke, Grip* (2016) that consists of 16 photographic portraits of young men who died prematurely of AIDS. The photographs are stilled

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<sup>40</sup> In an article of this scope I obviously can only hope to point out some elements of “the analogue.” Other aspects of theorizing materiality could be discussed, for instance the tactility of photographic prints as well as the references to dust and hair and other material particles in photographic prints and slide projections.

frames from pornographic movies, showing the men looking directly at the camera or absorbed in a moment of sexual ecstasy.<sup>41</sup> Printed on stained glass and then hidden underneath a coating of thermochromic pigment that appears black at room temperature, the photographs only become visible with the introduction of heat.<sup>42</sup> Bodies that are no longer alive are made to emerge by the heat emitted from a living body, showing the photographic chemical process to be alive yet mortal. Roland Barthes writes about the material mortality of the photograph: “like a living organism, it is born on the level of the sprouting silver grains, it flourishes a moment, then ages.”<sup>43</sup> *Kiss, Stroke, Grip* points to the chemical instability of photographic images and makes a conceptual analogy with the ephemerality of the human bodies depicted, fading and partly inaccessible behind the glass.

A different kind of fragility is that in Joachim Koester’s *Message from Andrée* (2005) where the focus is on the physical destruction of photographic negatives over an extended period of time (Figure 2). Koester uses images from the ill-fated 1897 Andrée expedition that were found in 1930 together with the bodies of the explorers on their last campsite on White Island in the Arctic Sea. After having been partially buried in the ice for thirty-three years, most of the five rolls of exposed film showed no recognizable imagery at all, only spots and scratches caused by the damaged emulsion. These images can be said to exemplify the materiality of the analogue photographic technique; although non-decipherable as imagery, what they show and bear witness to is the passage of time and the decay and loss resulting thereof. Digital files can be said to age and decay because the fast-changing technological development makes older file-formats illegible. This however, is not a material decay in the same way, but rather an issue of translation and thus has less obvious analogies to the human body.

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<sup>41</sup> TransformerStation, *Brian Ganter*, 2016, accessed April 17, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWSoQLXEILU>.

<sup>42</sup> Brian Ganter, “Kiss, Stroke, Grip,” *Brianganter.com*, accessed April 17, 2017, <https://www.brianganter.com/kiss-stroke-grip/>.

<sup>43</sup> Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 93.

*Damaged Negatives: Scratched Portrait of Mrs. Baqari* by Akram Zaatar also centers around the physical fragility of the photograph and how this is connected to the destruction of the body. Let me cite the way El Madani himself describes the back story of the image, as his choice of words and detail raise a number of interesting issues:

In the end we agreed that I would scratch the negatives of his wife with a pin, and I did it in front of him. Years later, after she burned herself to death to escape her misery, he came back to me asking for enlargements of those photographs, or other photographs she might have taken without his knowledge. A few years later, he lost one of his eyes in an accident.<sup>44</sup>

Here the destruction of the negative points to a quite literal destruction of the woman depicted. The idea, older than photography itself, is that harming an image is somehow tantamount to harming the person depicted, and that being photographed somehow puts one in harm's way as it entails that one is somehow "exposed" to danger.<sup>45</sup> Margaret Iversen discusses *punctum* in relation to Benjamin's notion of the *optical unconscious*, and the way Benjamin brings up the double portrait of Dauthendey and his wife in "A Short History of Photography."<sup>46</sup> Mrs. Dauthendey, similarly to Mrs Baqari, committed suicide a few years after the photograph was taken, and Iversen describes how knowing this fact makes the contemporary viewer search the picture to find the flaw or trauma of this future event in the woman's face: trying to discover that "which the camera so to speak could not censor, could not *not* see."<sup>47</sup> The portraits of Mrs Baqari and

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<sup>44</sup> The quote by Hashem el Madani is based on interviews by Akram Zaatar according to the brochure accompanying the exhibition *Akram Zaatar: Unfolding* at Moderna Museet, Stockholm, March 7–August 16, 2015. See note 2.

<sup>45</sup> This theme can be seen to be at work in all the works mentioned so far.

<sup>46</sup> Iversen refers to Benjamin's text as "Little History of Photography," but the essay is commonly translated as "A Short History of Photography." Baetens et al., "The Art Seminar," 157–158.

<sup>47</sup> Baetens et al., "The Art Seminar," 157. Italics in the original. Kaja Silverman also mentions this text and the fate of Mrs Dauthendey, see Silverman, *The Miracle of Analogy*, 144 ff.

Mrs Dauthendey are thus overlaid with their subsequent fate—what happens to them later is somehow taken to be visible in the photograph when viewed in the present.<sup>48</sup> In the case of Zaatari's image, another layering is at work as well; the way Mrs Baqari's domestic life, via the photography studio, intersects with wider structural violence and notions of gender at a particular time and place. Notably, the title of the work is *Damaged Negatives: Scratched Portrait of Mrs. Baqari* although according to El Madani's narrative, it is not clear that she was in fact married when the image was taken, only when it was scratched and later reproduced in its damaged condition—what is shown here is as much the later events (destruction) as the moment of the portrayal itself.

### Photographing the Invisible

A striking aspect of the statement by El Madani cited above is the way he ties the loss of the husband's eye to the destruction of the negative, as well as to his dramatic lack of knowledge and his desire to bear witness: "I did it in front of him" and "without his knowledge." Blindness can be connected to analogue photography in a number of ways. Archivist and theorist Verne Harris notes that the photographer at the moment of capture is literally blinded—it is only for a brief moment, but it is of course *the* critical moment for the photograph.<sup>49</sup> Harris' text is based on Jacques Derrida's discussion of drawing and blindness where he writes: "how can one claim to look at both a model and the lines [*traits*] that one jealously dedicates with one's own hand to the thing itself? Doesn't one have to be blind to one or the

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<sup>48</sup> Another possible trajectory to discuss here would be the significance of "burning" and its association to light burning into the chemical emulsion, but also memory burned into one's mind, etc.

<sup>49</sup> Harris even refers to the photograph as "the archive of the invisible." Verne Harris, "Blindness and the Archive: An Exergue," in *Orality, Memory, and the Past: Listening to the Voices of Black Clergy under Colonialism and Apartheid*, ed. Philippe Denis (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2000), 117.

other?”<sup>50</sup> That is to say, at the moment of drawing, one is either blind to the thing which one depicts, or to the drawing itself. The key point here in terms of “the analogue,” is the way blindness is conceptually connected to the photograph by the mechanical camera (one is not similarly blinded when photographing digitally), and that this in turn can be associated with the analogue medium of drawing.

Blindness or invisibility is also brought up in a statement by Joachim Koester who writes the following about his decision to focus on the most damaged negatives from the Andrée expedition: “If language defines our world, the black dots and light streaks on the photographs can be seen as bordering on the invisible, or marking the edge of the unknown. Pointing to the twilight zone of what can be told and what cannot be told, document and mistake.”<sup>51</sup> Here the illegible dots and scratches are signs that point beyond language as they have one foot in the evidentiary and the other in the mystical. In the binary division between digital and analogue, the former can be said to represent the rational, measurable, and coherent; while the latter associates to the natural, unpredictable, and unique. A digital photograph breaks up in a different way when enlarged; instead of blurring in continuous tones or graininess, the pixelated image is broken up into equally sized units, equally spaced and regular. Daniel Chandler connects this to other “analogical signs” such as visual images, gestures, textures, tastes, and smells that involve graded relationships on a continuum, and he points out that therefore these cannot be comprehensively catalogued.<sup>52</sup> Artists that wish to thematize this kind of graded complexity, subtleties, and that

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<sup>50</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 36.

<sup>51</sup> Joachim Koester et al., *Joachim Koester Of Spirits and Empty Spaces* (Villeurbanne: Institut d’art contemporain, Villeurbanne/Rhône-Alpes, 2014), 178.

<sup>52</sup> Chandler, *Semiotics*, 46. The term “analogue” or “analogical” as used by Chandler is broader than merely the technical binary between digital and analogue media. His suggestion that what characterize the “analogical” sign are the subtleties, gradations, and intangibility is highly relevant for the current discussion of “the analogue.”

which lies beyond words, may thus do so by mobilizing “the analogue” as a conceptual thematic cluster. When using photography in this way, the evidentiary truth of the medium is stressed as well as its intuitive and associative qualities: “the analogue” captures both of these seemingly contradictory elements, and can be said to operate in the tension between them. It highlights a firm material tie between the event and the image, but also a mystical complex set of connotations that stem from its material substrate.

### Temporality and History

A frequently evoked symbol of the photographic process is that of freezing a moment, and therefore the photograph is thought to be a stark reminder of the inevitability of time passing. Vera Lutter’s negative images of buildings and cityscapes are made using the camera obscura technique. Her long exposures (often hours, sometimes days and even weeks) create the effect of cities inhabited by shadowy presences as cars and humans generally go by too fast to stick to the photosensitive paper. In her first series of images using a shipping container as a camera obscura, Lutter placed it inside a hangar where a zeppelin was being built (Figure 3). This work can be discussed in terms of an interest in old technology, but another striking temporal aspect is also at work here.<sup>53</sup> After some experimenting, Lutter figured out that the exposure time needed to capture the zeppelin was four days. She explains what happens next:

The zeppelin was still being tested and corrected, and one day, during my exposure, the company decided to pull it out for a test flight. During the four days of exposure, the zeppelin was flying for two days and for two days it was parked in front of my camera. When the zeppelin was gone, whatever was behind and around

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<sup>53</sup> The mobilization of “the analogue” can be said to be part of a larger trend to go back to old technology, seen in the development of media archaeology in the academy and interest in camera obscura and other old techniques in art production. There is, however, a difference between using old technology and what I am discussing here as referencing the conceptual connotations of this technology. See also Bishop, “Digital Divide,” 436. Baetens et al., “The Art Seminar,” 166–167.



**Figure 3.** *Zeppelin, Friedrichshafen, I: August 10–13, 1999.* Vera Lutter, 1999. Unique, silver gelatin print. Copyright: Vera Lutter/Bildupphovsrätt 2018. License: CC-BY-NC-ND.

it inscribed itself onto the photograph, but when it was placed inside the hangar, the outline of the zeppelin imprinted itself. It was rather dark inside the hangar, so things inscribed themselves very slowly. The result was this incredible image of a translucent zeppelin, which was half hangar and half zeppelin.<sup>54</sup>

What is captured here is the juxtaposition of several temporalities shown as a gradation of visibility of the zeppelin—it is not a question of a binary visible-or-invisible, but a gradual absence of the zeppelin, visible as a presence in the image. Similarly, *Message from Andrée* can be discussed in terms of capturing time on film, but here with some added layers of temporal references. The work is an animation of still images, and thus it captures the long duration of the negatives being buried under the ice but also the shift from still photography to the extended duration of the animated film.

<sup>54</sup> Peter Wollen, “Vera Lutter by Peter Wollen,” *BOMB* # 85 (Fall 2003), accessed April 17, 2017, <http://bombmagazine.org/article/2584/vera-lutter>.

Another way temporality is thematized in contemporary photographic artworks is Godfrey's above-cited suggestion that the artist's work references that of the historian, making work *about* the past. Here the photographic document is treated as a historical trace capable of reconnecting to events in a historical or extended timeframe. *On This Site: Landscape in Memoriam* (1993–1996) is a series where Joel Sternfeld travelled around the United States and documented fifty-two sites of violence including the sites of the 1955 killing of Emmett Till, the 1978 assassination of Harvey Milk, the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, and the 1991 beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles.<sup>55</sup> The series can be said to use the photographic document as a conceptual index, walking in footprints several decades old. Kate Palmer Albers discusses Sternfeld as one of several examples of a shift in photography from being considered as a record of the past to looking at it “as an object that will activate a relationship with a future audience,” that is to say, a way of “rethinking photographic indexicality in terms of the performative.”<sup>56</sup> Sternfeld uses the idea of the photograph as capable of connecting materially to the past (index) while simultaneously showing this to be elusive and uncertain. Index is mobilized in interpretations of this work without relying too heavily on Peirce and the materiality of the index as a stencil or proof, but rather as an indication, pointing out, drawing attention to, an event or person.<sup>57</sup>

### Copy, Original, and Reproduction

The status of copies and reproductions becomes a key concern with the advent of digital media. It is when analogue photography is contrasted with digital that the former is seen to have a more

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<sup>55</sup> Albers, *Uncertain Histories*, 111.

<sup>56</sup> Albers, *Uncertain Histories*, 115.

<sup>57</sup> Similarly, David Green and Joanna Lowry distinguish between two types of indexicality where one is connected to loss and the other to the performative. David Green and Joanna Lowry, “From Presence to the Performative: Rethinking Photographic Indexicality,” in *Where Is the Photograph?*, ed. David Green (Maidstone: Photoworks, Photoforum, 2003), 47–60.

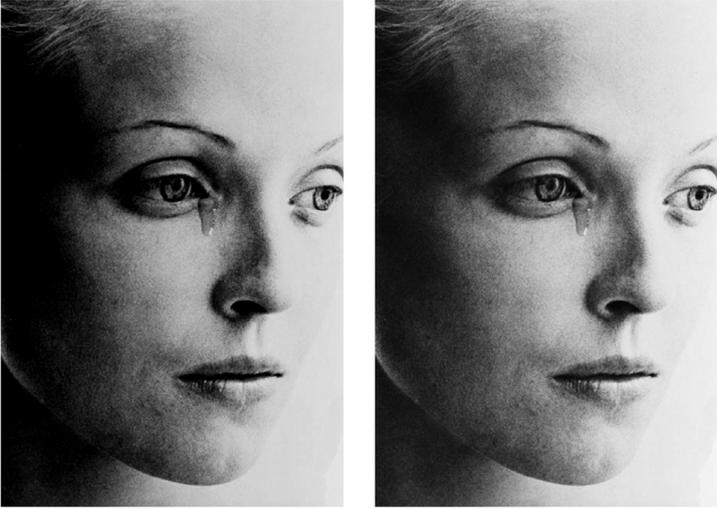
clear-cut relationship between original and copy than the latter where copy and original are largely non-distinguishable. Zaatari's scratched portrait of Mrs Baqari mobilizes this aspect of "the analogue" in the way the husband is described as returning to El Madani's studio and asks for copies to be made from the damaged negatives—damaged because of his own previous insistence that no such copies should be possible. What is accessible at that point is only an image based on a new original in which the damage is inexorably inscribed; the link to the past is intact, but the violence done to the image is part of the modified original and is impossible to bypass. It is notable that the scratch, when enlarged, is seen to go through one of Mrs. Baqari's eyes, blinding also her.

Lotta Antonsson's installations reference the material process of analogue photography directly by placing silver, mirrors, sand on pedestals, thereby pointing to the way photography is never a transparent view of reality, but is already filtered through a material process. Instead of discussing Antonsson in terms of this materiality, however, I wish to focus on another related aspect of her work by considering the diptych *Sans Titre (hommage à B. Lategan)* (2008) and its references to reproduction and post-production manipulation (Figure 4). Based on a found image, the work consists of two seemingly identical images of a woman's face with a large tear in one of her eyes. At closer inspection it is clear that the two prints are developed with slight but clear differences; one is more diffused, the other more high contrast, showing the texture of the woman's skin. The tear, adding dramatic narrative to the picture, has in fact been added by the artist manually during post-production.

Antonsson has a long-standing interest in identity, and she has in several works photographed adolescent girls at the cusp of adulthood. This interest can be related to her focus on the photographic process itself, and post-production as something that is clearly and unambiguously "after" the initial image.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> With digital photography one can do many alterations such as brighten, get rid of red-eye, and overlay different kinds of filters and effects right in the digital camera. Also, there is no diminishing quality, no sense that the altered copy is less or even hierarchically dependent on the original in the same way as in analogue media.



**Figure 4.** *Sans Titre (hommage à B. Lategan)*. Lotta Antonsson, 2008. Silvergelatin photography, collage. Copyright: Lotta Antonsson. License: CC-BY-NC-ND.

The process of becoming a fully-formed adult is analogous to the process of becoming that is inherent to the analogue photographic process. The seeds of the image are held in the negative, and the image is gently prodded and coaxed, manipulated and forced to appear by the photographer in the darkroom. In that sense, both nurture and nature are needed to create and form the finished image, there is an element of inevitability, yet, as we have seen, also a great deal of unpredictability and room for manipulation. Antonsson's continued use of the analogue mode of working, even after digital technology has become the norm, is deliberate and comes at a cost (time and money). Still, it appears that she is using the specific associations of "the analogue" in order to further the theme of becoming explored in her larger oeuvre as well as the photograph's ability to manipulate the viewer's emotional response by subtle means. Similar to what was brought up in the discussion of Zaatari's work, the eye and vision is the focus here too.



**Figure 5.** *Selection from the Analogue Portfolio.* Zoe Leonard, 1998/2009. Dye transfer prints, 20 × 16 inches each/50.8 × 40.64 cm each. Copyright: Zoe Leonard. Courtesy of the artist, Hauser & Wirth, New York and Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne. License: CC-BY-NC-ND.

### Death of a Medium

My final example is Zoe Leonard's photographic series with the fitting title *Analogue* (1998–2009) that works with direct references to the moribund medium (Figure 5). The project began close to the artist's home on Manhattan's Lower East Side and Brooklyn, but it has since expanded in scope to include images from Mexico City, Kampala, Warsaw, and East Jerusalem. Tightly framed views of small photography stores, electronic repair shops, clothing stores, and Coca-Cola stalls, Leonard's series is a systematic documentation of a world on the verge of becoming extinct due to technological development, urban gentrification, and changing structures in the global economy.

On one level, Leonard's title directly refers to the medium she uses: shot on a vintage Rolleiflex camera, the images are always shown with the frame of the negative clearly visible—proving that the photographs have not been cropped but are authentic documents. On another level, the key aspect of the work is that

the medium mirrors the subject matter: the storefronts are just as “analogue” as the photographic technique that captures them. Let us here recall Martin Lister’s differentiation between digital and analogue media and consider it in relation to Leonard’s series. Digital media, characterized by conversion of physical properties into an arbitrary numerical code, is contrasted in analogue media by a process in which one set of physical properties are transferred into another, analogous set; and represents via continuous variations of tone instead of dividing the image into measurable and exactly reproducible elements. Thus by highlighting her work as specifically “analogue,” Leonard points to the way these stores are specific, rooted in their local urban materiality, in contrast with the infinitely reproducible chain-stores and multi-national corporations that replace them. Another *analogous* relationship between the medium and the subject matter is that both are about to be made obsolete.<sup>59</sup> Not long ago, it seemed that these kinds of storefronts would always be around, there was nothing remarkable about them, in a similar way that photography was thought to be inseparable from its chemical base. Leonard’s photographs are in this sense documents that preserve for posterity that which is lagging behind in a fast-changing world, but the very medium by which these documents are created is also about to disappear. Leonard’s motifs are depicted precisely because they are in the “wrong” time; they are in the present, but belong to the past.<sup>60</sup> They look like old photographs, yet their aesthetic is also

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<sup>59</sup> The term “analogue” and its etymological closeness to terms like “analogous” or “analogy” is interesting in its own right and could be added to the discussion of the meaning associated with the medium. However, the scope of the current paper does not allow for such an excursion.

<sup>60</sup> Mark Godfrey writes in response to a questionnaire on “The Contemporary” that many artists exhibit an ambivalence to the contemporary, that they are not feeling at home in their own time. This is seen, according to Godfrey, in the way they are resistant to economic, sociological, and political conditions of the present moment, but also in the way they are “not particularly attracted to the conditions or opportunities of the present,” Godfrey goes on to contrast Zoe Leonard and Tacita Dean with Dada artists of the 1920s who were willing to use new technologies to respond critically to the 1920s. “Questionnaire on ‘The Contemporary,’” *October* 130 (2009): 31.

hyper-contemporary since apps like Instagram mimic the look of these media. The temporal layerings here are multiple: the photographs point back to a past about to be extinct, but also to a future (from the point of view of 1998) when this aesthetic is vernacular again, albeit via digital rather than analogue photographic technique.

Akram Zaatari's *Damaged Negatives: Scratched Portrait of Mrs. Baqari* can also be considered in terms of a moribund medium. Zaatari is the co-founder of the Arab Image Foundation that collects and archives photographic prints and negatives from around the Middle East.<sup>61</sup> The impetus behind the AIF was the disappearance of studios like El Madani's that were enmeshed in the social fabric of a particular community, and the resulting loss of old photographic prints and negatives. *Scratched Portrait of Mrs. Baqari* is the result of Zaatari's archaeological excavation of El Madani's studio and is part of a larger installation including super-8 movies, archive cabinets, and several films and photographs showing the material inventory of the studio: pens, rulers, cameras, film, props, highlighting the way the studio is considered as a historical site.

## Concluding Remarks

This essay has suggested that the so-called digital turn opens the possibility of tapping into analogue photography as a conceptual and cultural sensitivity distinguishable from the technique, and that this can be productively used in the analysis of specific artworks.

Let me, by way of rounding off, return to Lars Elleström's two dichotomies: that between the contextual and the operational qualifying aspects of photography, and the further sub-division of the latter into photography as document and photography as art. I have already stated that the differentiation between documentary and artistic aspects breaks down in the kind of artworks discussed in this essay, and the reasons for this—that they mobilize notions of photography as document precisely as the conceptual

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<sup>61</sup> See Arab Image Foundation, accessed April 17, 2017, <http://www.fai.org.lb>.

and aesthetic content of the artworks—should hopefully be clear by now. Similarly, the distinction Elleström makes between contextual and operational qualifying aspects breaks down in the case of the artworks discussed here via “the analogue” because the contextual—a photographic practice located within a post-conceptual art context—is an integral part of the operational logic of these artworks. I want to stress that I am not bringing up Elleström here merely to challenge his distinctions—in fact, he is very clear that these categories do not necessarily operate in opposition to one another—but rather to point out their usefulness in clarifying postconceptual photography as a special case that requires adapted intermedial tools. The intermedial analysis carried out on the previous pages has attempted to dissect relations between media on a number of different levels: relations between old and new media, but more specifically, relations between operational and contextual aspects of analogue photography, as well as that between different kinds of operational qualifying aspects. The artists working with photography in this postconceptual mode mobilize the notion of the photograph as objective, truth-telling, non-auratic document that the conceptual artists in the 1960s and ’70s were concerned with—practices where the documentary aspect Elleström highlights became an aesthetic trope and something stressed in various texts surrounding the artworks. However, when contemporary artists mobilize what I have referred to as “the analogue” in their practices, they are simultaneously challenging the way conceptual artists used photography by highlighting material, auratic, and mystical elements of analogue photography, but at the same time that they are operating within the discursive tradition that established photography as a conceptual artistic medium. Put slightly differently, “the analogue” can be understood in terms of image/text as discussed by W. J. T. Mitchell.<sup>62</sup> In a similar way that Mitchell offers “the figure

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<sup>62</sup> “The image/text problem is not just something constructed ‘between’ the arts, the media, or different forms of representation, but an unavoidable issue *within* the individual art and media. In short, all arts are ‘composite’ arts (both text and image); all media are mixed media combining different codes, discursive conventions, channels, sensory and cognitive

of the image/text as a wedge to pry open the heterogeneity of media and of specific representations,” “the analogue” is a tool that can pry open different kinds of medial relations in the postconceptual photographic practices under consideration in this essay.<sup>63</sup> When using photography as an artistic medium within a context of a discursive theorization of art, the operational and contextual qualifying aspects inevitably merge, and “the analogue” thus functions both as a reference to a historical discourse as well as a methodological category. The terminology of intermediality can be defined as a movement or space in between or across different media. In this essay, an intermedial analysis has been carried out on the particular case of contemporary photographic practices among artists where the artists’ self-reflexivity necessitates a processing of media as non-transparent and with no absolute separation between content and form. The in-betweenness at work here is thus one between medium-as-technique and medium-as-conceptual-connotation. This text has been a first attempt to use the notion of “the analogue” as an intermedial concept to analyze how meaning is generated in a specific subset of photographic practices among contemporary artists, and as such it will no doubt need to be developed further in future studies.

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modes.” W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 94–95.

<sup>63</sup> Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, 100.

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