

UC San Diego

UC San Diego Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

The Camera as a Transducing Thingamajig

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4bg0c5nn>

Author

Kershaw, Alexander Heathcote

Publication Date

2016

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

The Camera as a Transducing Thingamajig

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements

for the degree Master of Arts

in

Art History, Theory and Criticism

by

Alexander Heathcote Kershaw

Committee in charge:

Professor Lesley Stern, Chair
Professor Grant Kester
Professor Alena Williams
Professor Elana Zilberg

2016

Copyrightt

Alexander Heathcote Kershaw, 2016

All rights reserved.

The Thesis of Alexander Heathcote Kershaw is approved and acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically.

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2016

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Signature Page.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Abstract of the Thesis.....	v
Introduction.....	1
The Camera as a Memory-thing, Body-thing, and Puzzle-thing.....	4
Photography, Cameras, and Material Culture Studies.....	11
The Camera as Transducer.....	15
Police Photography: The Camera as Transducer in Photographic Events.....	21
Transducing Doubt.....	21
Transducing Somatic Effects.....	30
Transducing Tasks that Filter Empathy.....	39
Conclusion.....	44
Works Cited.....	46

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The Camera as a Transducing Thingamajig

by

Alexander Heathcote Kershaw

Master of Arts in Art History, Theory and Criticism

University of California, San Diego, 2016

Professor Lesley Stern, Chair

In the context of material culture studies, how might the camera be considered as both a thing and an object? Rather than calibrating our sense of what photography is from the viewer's experience of images, this paper draws on fieldwork with police photographers in Los Angeles and San Diego, to present a series of proposals for recasting our understanding of what photography is when the camera takes centre stage. As a thing, the camera is presented as a "memory-thing," a "body-thing," and a "puzzle-thing," when it is not performing its 'intended' function as an apparatus for

apprehending images. Alternatively, as an object, the camera is conceived as a “transducer,” which serves as a model for conceptualizing the apparatus as a technology of affect. In this regard, the camera facilitates exploratory processes of photographic doubt; produces somatic effects on police photographers and their subjects; and affords police photographers the ability to manage empathy for the victims of crime they photograph, by preoccupying the photographer with technical and compositional considerations.

Introduction

New theoretical approaches emerging from the field of material culture studies over the last 30 years point toward the urgent need to develop different ways of considering relationships between matter, agency, and our world. Through its re-enchantment with the object, that could be described as an interest in the thingness of things, material culture studies has given birth to a whole host of thingamajigs that we seem to know less about than we originally thought. The discipline of photography has been rejuvenated through the lens of material culture studies via its reconsideration of images as things that eclipse their more object-like ability to establish a verisimilitude with the ‘real.’ The influence of actor-network-theory on material culture studies has added fuel to the fire, through its acknowledgement of the non-human within intersubjective encounters, promising a vastly more nuanced account of sociotechnical networks. However, this much-needed renovation has to a large extent missed an opportunity to challenge our sense of what photography is, by not adequately considering the very thing that it would be impossible to make photographs without—the camera. Instead, photography’s reevaluation has taken place primarily through a reconsideration of the image rather than through an attention to the specific times and technologies in which images are produced. Alternatively, is it possible to re-think photography when the camera is considered as a thing that exceeds its capacity as a technology of representation? As an object, what affordances do cameras make available to photographers and subjects during the time that images are made that

shape intersubjective experience? What kinds of social realities are made possible that would otherwise be impossible without the camera?

In the spirit of these questions, the camera can be understood as not only an apparatus that produces representational images but also a thing as well as an object that transduces specific relational qualities as it interfaces between photographers and their subjects in the world. Thinking of the camera in this way recasts photography through the time in which images are created rather than from the viewer's experience of images—the latter being an approach that has largely produced our sense of what photography is and what it is not. The value of reorienting the approach is that it opens up new possibilities for thinking about photography when we are no longer held to ransom by our obsession with the image. My hope is that, in turn, this might point to new ways for thinking about images, that is, once photographic practices are given the opportunity to speak back to images.

My analysis of the camera takes place within the context of police photography, predominantly as a result of research with crime scene and forensic photographers in San Diego and Los Angeles, California. My consideration of the camera begins by presenting it as a “memory-thing,” “body-thing,” and “puzzle-thing.” These properties of the camera are manifest when it is not ‘properly’ performing its intended function as an apparatus for apprehending images. Alternatively, as an object, I consider the camera as a transducer, which serves as a model for conceptualizing the camera as a technology of affect. Here I draw on fieldwork with photographers from the Los Angeles Police Department, the San Diego Police Department, and the San Diego

Sheriff's Department. The opportunity to experience them at work shapes three proposals I make for the way cameras function as transducers—as an apparatus responsible for converting energies that pass between photographers and their subjects. As transducers, cameras facilitate exploratory processes of photographic doubt, produce somatic effects on police photographers and their subjects, as well as afford police photographers the ability to manage empathy for the victims of crime they photograph. Broadly, these proposals serve as a means for unhinging photography from the image—to consider photography as a thing that happens, rather than from a perspective calibrated by the conceptual, ideological, and symbolic portent of images. Thus, rather than lamenting the potentially thin or obscured presence of the agents responsible for catalyzing images by rethinking the image, I ask —what might be discovered about photography when we place the camera center stage?

The Camera as a Memory-thing, Body-thing, and Puzzle-thing

The Photography Unit at the LAPD has an impressive display of decommissioned cameras, a viewing of which embodies a concept familiar to material culture studies—that when objects lose their ‘proper’ purpose they become more accurately designated as things.¹ Located at 555 Ramirez Street in Downtown Los Angeles, the Scientific Investigations Divisions’ (SIDs) headquarters occupy the entire second floor of the former LAPD storehouse—a bunker like facility where the rooms are large and the concrete is thick.² One of the most striking features I noticed upon entering the staff photographers’ central office is their remarkable collection of used cameras. The assemblage of over 100 cameras that formerly served LAPD photographers is perched on a shelf about two meters above the floor that runs three-quarters the length of the 65-foot east wall. The shelf is installed above ten computer terminals where photographers upload, archive, and retrieve their images through the Digital Information Management System (DIMS). Once you get over the impossibility of ever being able to get a fix on how many cadavers and criminals these cameras have collectively photographed, there is something astonishing about their materiality that sets in. Their collection, which now includes a few digital models, is not arranged

¹ For example see Arjun Appadurai, ed. *The Social Life of Things*. Cambridge: Cambridge University

² The Scientific Investigation Division (SID), of which the Photography Unit is part, was incorporated in 1927. They moved into their current building on Ramirez Street in January 2013. Today, the SID is comprised of two sections. The scientific end includes the Serology/DNA Unit, Toxicology Unit, Comparative Analysis Unit, and Questioned Documents Unit. The technical end includes Electronic Surveillance Unit, Photography Unit, Latent Prints Unit, and the Polygraph Unit.

in chronological order. Nor is the position of each camera determined by their capacity to record greater or lesser amounts of information. Instead, they are arranged as to accentuate the diversity of their shape, size, and material components.

For example, a pristine clear and black anodized aluminum large format camera, with its worn bellows stretched to capacity like a snake trying to warm itself, dwarfs the ultra-compact APS Olympus next to it. The austere ruggedness of a Nikon FM2s chromed silumin alloy body is set off against the more flamboyant Graflex Graphic, with its chrome lens plate and elegant satin black folding frame. A telephoto lens, which peeks over the edge of the shelf, draws the eye to a small boxy Nikon screwed to a ratty looking rifle butt. Mounted at a severe angle on Manfrotto 3-way pan/tilt head, a Hasselblad bears down on the room imperiously. Adjacent to it, a wooden 4x5 field camera sits with the patience of a plein-air painter. Interspersed is a variety of paraphernalia—portable Norman power packs are spread open to reveal their internal circuitry or a roll of Agfa 35mm film with its tongue pulled out, leans on a steel developing spool. In its entirety this presentation makes clear the incredible diversity and experimentation in form invested in the camera apparatus, all of which once served the same basic function of focusing light on the rear end of a black box. However, now in their twilight years, this is a function these cameras no longer serve.

In the 91 years that separates a modest 4x7 field camera and their newest addition, a Nikon D300—the installation serves as a timeline that narrates the activities of one of the oldest dedicated police photography units in the United States. For staff at the Scientific Investigations Division (SID) this nostalgic display is

tangible testimony of something to be proud of. The cameras' presence operates as an impetus for motivating the staff by reminding them of the significant historical lineage of which they are now part. It also might make them a little nervous, for the fact that almost all police departments around the United States are phasing out their dedicated photography units (if they ever had one), in a climate where body camera's are being used to illuminate the work of policing itself. In this way, it keeps staff mindful of the need to make what they do count. The sentiment of the display is not unlike a series of employee of the month headshots that one often encounters in the workplace. More specifically though, the display is reminiscent of the framed photographs of officers, which one notices along the hallways upon entering the SID. Though, while the sentiment of the camera display might be honorific, these cameras are far from dead.

Included in their line-up is a Mamiya RB67 Pro-S, a camera that piqued my curiosity seeing that it was the first 'real' camera I ever bought. It was the camera that Michael Berner and I talked about on my first visit to the Photography Unit.³ I met Michael at the start of his shift at six in the evening, during which time he works as the commanding officer coordinating all of the jobs photographers are assigned, until two in the morning when his shift ends. Michael has worked for the Photography Unit for 23 years, ten of which were spent in the field as a photographer. Given my familiarity with the Mamiya RB67 Pro-S, it was the first camera I asked him about. He explained that an earlier incarnation, the Mamiya C220 twin-lens reflex camera, holds a special place for him, as it was the camera his mentor used during Michael's first homicide

³ Although my subjects granted me permission to use their names, all their names have all been changed for this paper. The Mamiya RB67 Pro-S was used as the LAPD's studio camera until 2001, when the first commercially available digital SLR, the Kodak DCS 760, replaced it.

when he went to learn the ropes. In that particular case, a male prostitute was bludgeoned on the back of the head and then thrown upside down into a window well at Hollywood High School. For Michael, “it was the whole big enchilada, all at once, in one crime scene, with criminalists, detectives, and Robbery Homicide”⁴ and the Mamiya brought back memories of the way his mentor “talked me through each shot and why he was taking each shot, as he was taking it and this has stuck with me the whole time.”⁵ Thus, like photographs, cameras also possess the ability to evoke memories of the past.

Michael’s discussion of the Mamiya reminded me of the experience of purchasing my first ‘real’ camera. In 1998 when I was an undergraduate student in a fine arts program in Australia, I decided that the medium format Mamiya RB67, which had earned its reputation as the “workhorse of the pros,”⁶ was the camera for me. I was regularly taking the Mamiya out on loan from the university’s equipment store during my studies. Lugging the camera and a few lenses around in my backpack with a modest tripod strapped to the side (which came in at around 20lbs), was an experience that felt less like mobilizing the determination of a Suffolk Punch and more like strapping the weight of a Sherman Tank to my back. I was however, undeterred by the fact that the Mamiya was more popular as a studio camera. I tracked one down through the Trading Post that was well priced. I called a man (whose name I have long since forgotten) and organized a time to visit him at his house to check it out. Upon

⁴ Berner, Michael. "Interview with Michael Berner." By Alex Kershaw. *Los Angeles Police Department, Scientific Investigations Division, Photography Unit* (2015).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ MamiyaLeaf. "Mamiya Rb67 Pro Sd." MamiyaLeaf, http://www.mamiyaleaf.com/legacy_RB67.asp.

arriving at his home, he offered me a glass of water and ushered into the family dining room where a Mamiya RB67 Pro-S kit was spread across their entire eight-seater dining table, methodically separated into its 42 constituent parts.⁷ It felt as though I had walked into an operating theatre midway through an anatomy demonstration for surgery students. In the meticulous dissection of its current state, it seemed as though, there was no way this thing would be taking pictures any time soon.

As the initial phase of our transaction proceeded, this thing began to present itself as more body-like than camera-like. Although I had used the camera before, I wasn't sure it was possible to disassemble it to such an extent, which made me moderately unnerved and perhaps a little suspicious. To calm my nerves, like any sensible second-hand shopper would, I asked the man why he was selling it. He explained that he had used the camera for work as a crime scene and forensic photographer for the New South Wales Police Department. Having recently retired from the force he had no need for the camera anymore. Although this specimen was in impeccable condition the Mamiya RB67 Pro-S was well beyond its prime. Manufactured between 1974 and 1990, in the late 1990s the New South Wales Police Department sent this workhorse off to the glue factory, replacing it with Nikon digital SLRs. With this knowledge, the scene took on a slightly more macabre tenor. The apparatus now more closely resembled a collection of stiff body parts waiting

⁷ The kit included: one camera body, two collapsible focusing hoods, two magnifying lens', two 6x7 centimetre film backs, one 4x5 centimetre film back, three 120 film inserts, three dark slides, one polaroid back, four spools, one left hand grip holder, one mirror up cable release, one standard cable release, one 90mm lens, one 127mm lens, one 250mm lens, three lens hoods, two extension tubes, three black and white filters, three ultraviolet light filters, one camera carry strap, four focusing screens, one mounting lock/nameplate for the focusing hood, one revolving adapter, one film insert, one camera case with inserts and strap, and a collection of threads.

patiently in the aftermath of an autopsy. My eyes wandered over the assortment of Fresnel glass-focusing screens and it struck me as uncanny that this camera had now, at least temporarily, met a fate similar to the many corpses that would have materialized to this man on the surface of these ground glass screens.

As our negotiations progressed, this thing began to present itself as more puzzle-like than camera-like. My body's experience of the camera was topographic, in that I was presented with a perplexing array of metal, glass, and plastic to be witnessed from above—a jumble of things to be looked down on rather than a device to be looked through. In this way, as Bill Brown suggests, the transparency of this once stable object was placed in tension with the opacity of a thing, where, “a *thing*, in contrast, can hardly function as a window.”⁸ However, knowing my vendor's background it now seemed natural to present the camera as a puzzle to be solved. By theatrically recasting his dining room table into a crime scene, the camera became a collection of clues to be inspected and then pieced back together. His intention in pulling the camera apart was not only meant to impress, it was integral to his sales pitch, which involved us putting the camera back together again. It became a performative event that Victor Turner may have described as liminal—a transitional phase after separation and prior to reincorporation.⁹ It also seemed to qualify as liminal for the grotesque quality of the scene where elements were messed about with in a subversive and slightly ludic way, where “in liminality people ‘play’ with the elements of the familiar and defamiliarize them. Novelty emerges from unprecedented

⁸ Bill Brown, "Thing Theory." *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (2001): 4.

⁹ Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*. New York: PAJ Publications, 1982: 24.

combinations of regular elements.”¹⁰ In the time that it took us to put the camera back together again, we performed the camera’s “full mechanical reliability,”¹¹ which is one of its most distinctive selling points. In what we could call the camera’s base materiality (that is, its most literally material state), its function was demonstrated not in its capacity to produce images but in its ability to prove itself capable of being reassembled—transformed from a body-puzzle-like-thing to something that looked more like the camera I knew. Its status as an object was only conferred when I retrieved my first roll of correctly exposed film back from the lab a week later.

¹⁰ Ibid., 27.

¹¹ "Mamiya RB67 Pro SD," MamiyaLeaf, accessed November 19, 2015, http://www.mamiyaleaf.com/legacy_RB67.asp.

Photography, Cameras, and Material Culture Studies

While my purchase of the Mamiya RB67 Pro-S and the LAPDs Photography Unit's camera collection serves more broadly as examples for re-thinking photography in terms of what cameras might be when they are not 'properly' cameras, other approaches within the context of material culture studies have attempted to recast the status of photographs themselves. It is no coincidence that attempts to invigorate a sense of photography's materiality has occurred in the same moment in which we are witness to the medium's dematerialization.¹² One approach has been to re-think two-dimensional images as three-dimensional things, where the seductive materiality of an image's surface obscures and resists its potential to be looked through.¹³ In different ways Olu Oguibe, W. T. J. Mitchell, and Martin Jay, have all stressed the more magical relation photographs have *with* the real rather than their verisimilitude *to* the real. Olu Oguibe emphasizes the importance of thinking about photography as a social

¹² A dematerialization characterized by the almost total disappearance of chemical-print processes in favor of digital modes of display, innovation in fully automated cameras for lifelogging practices that follow us around without having to be held, and digital storage devices that eradicate the need for bulky archives.

¹³ For good examples of this perspective, see Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, ed. *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images*. London; New York: Routledge, 2004. However, these articulations remain somewhat unsatisfying in that they are based on a rather literal interpretation of materiality as primarily a physical quality. In approaches like those taken in this edited volume materiality and immateriality are largely understood as independent categories. However, these categories are not separate realms but co-dependent in creating a sense of what the other one is. Even in our own very real engagements with matter in the world we only ever perceive part of what is there. Our perceptions of what we see are always completed by things that we cannot see but that we assume to be there. Thus, materiality should be defined in terms what it is not, as much as what it is. In this way it is important to consider materiality as a cognitive ideal or as having virtual qualities as much as a "real" physical thing. Given that we do not literally experience the "real" thing in photographs, its materiality is just as much about the authenticity of the viewers' cognitive and sensorial proximity to that thing experienced as representation.

process in his discussion of photographic practice in Ako and Yorba cultures.¹⁴ Martin Jay advocates for what he calls a “magical nominalism” in photography that accounts for the slippery and shifting thingness of images that resist representing a canon of universal forms or semiotic indexes.¹⁵ In his topsy-turvy rendering of the ontological life-worlds of images Mitchell suggests, “if there are no images without objects (as material support or referential trigger), there are no objects without images.”¹⁶ I would also add that there would be neither objects nor images without time. In this sense, what bearing might the camera have on photographic events in addition to its capacity as an apparatus of representation? One problem with the current state of analysis, which is still largely tethered to the image, is that it forecloses new possibilities for thinking about cameras differently. What I would like to do is reorder the terms by introducing the camera not as an object connected to the photograph, which may or may not index a transparent reality—but the camera as an object that participates in events, events which because of their ephemeral nature and lack of critical attention still remain largely opaque.

However, before attempting to explore this possibility, it is important to state that I am not advocating an object agency for the camera at the expense of human agency, or any other agency for that matter. Nor would I propose that cameras have their own independent agency. In part, the relevance of actor-network-theory (ANT) as a model for material culture studies is its accommodation of the fact that

¹⁴ Olu Oguibe, *The Culture Game*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

¹⁵ Martin Jay, "Magical Nominalism: Photography and the Re-Enchantment of the World." *Culture, Theory & Critique* 50, no. 2-3 (2009): 165-83.

¹⁶ W.J.T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005: 108.

intersubjectivity is never exclusively human or social but tied up with the non-human in processes where bodies and technologies are always imbricated. ANT shows us that agency is achieved through relational exchanges between humans and non-humans, where technology can't be isolated from embodied practices.¹⁷ Bruno Latour makes this point clear when he traces the development of Kodak's first camera to suggest that one of the most productive ways to account for the reciprocal relation between technology and society is to follow innovations.¹⁸ Latour traces Kodak's history as an example of innovation where the now all too familiar narrative of the company's market domination was not necessarily a clear cut matter of simple causation but a complex reciprocal network of human and non-human "actants," imbricated in processes of co-evolution and co-production. In this process, "the new amateurs and Eastman's camera co-produced each other. We see neither resistance to, nor opening of, nor acceptance of, nor refusal of technical progress. Instead we see millions of

¹⁷ Thus, in order to return our attention to the camera as an object to be used, actor-network theory's influence on material culture studies' recognition of the diversity of actors, in constituting practices and producing knowledge is significant. Through the lens of ANT, the study of material culture has a bearing on photography not only in relation to its distinction between objects and things but for the way it advocates a more complex connectivity between humans and non-humans (in this case the camera) by broadening the scope of the possible ontologies and agents to be considered. In different ways, Alfred Gell, Paul Graves-Brown, Carl Knappett, and Bruno Latour have all suggested the way agency is distributed and co-dependent. Perhaps most famously, Latour has challenged the modernist supposition that we exist in an empirical and objectified relation to the world unlike 'non-modern' cultures. Latour challenges the hubris of our own thinking, which often places human agency centre-stage. He criticizes the binary distinctions we make between humans and non-humans with regards to the attribution of agency as well as distinctions between the animate and inanimate. Instead, Latour prefers a messy network of impure forms (actors) that are constantly being modified, replaced and rearranged. This facilitates recognition of the non-human and points to the potential for considering the agency of the camera itself where the question becomes—in what ways can the camera be considered a technology of affect? Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 1998. Paul Graves-Brown, ed. *Matter, Materiality and Modern Culture*. London; New York: Routledge, 2000. Carl Knappett, *Thinking through Material Culture*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge and Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991.

¹⁸ Bruno Latour, "Technology Is Society Made Durable." In *Sociology of Monsters: Essays on Power, Technology and Domination* edited by John Law, 103-32. London; New York: Routledge, 1991.

people, held by an innovation that they themselves hold.”¹⁹ While the eventual release of their box-brownie camera secured Kodak a monopoly in 1899, a series of successive innovations up to this point reveal a variety of other variables revealing that domination is an effect rather than a cause. For Latour, this innovation reveals "a highly unstable and negotiated situation in which domination is not yet exerted,"²⁰ while exposing the enigmatic variables of socio-technical relations that so often elude social theory. The bearing Latour’s example has on my own study of the camera is cautionary—while it might be possible to contemplate the affordances cameras present to their users, it is important not to forget that camera apparatuses and camera users are entangled in processes where they co-produce each other.

¹⁹ Ibid., 117.

²⁰ Ibid., 129.

The Camera as Transducer

As an apparatus entwined in processes of co-producing images the camera can be thought of as a technology of affect—or in other words a transducer. As a transducer, the camera is an apparatus responsible for altering the overall flow and experience of the times in which photographs are made. At its most general, a transducer is a device that transfers or transforms energy from one form into another.²¹ In terms of the body, all sensory receptors are transducers in that they transform kinetic energy, light, sound, heat, and energy from chemical reactions into nerve impulses or action potentials.²² In terms of the camera, this quality connotes the capacity of the apparatus to manipulate or convert energy passing between the subject or object facing the lens and the photographer who is positioned behind the lens. As a means of illustrating this quality of the camera I would like to begin with what is perhaps most particular about the genre of portraiture in crime scene photography—which is that the photographer's subjects are for the most part no longer living. When I asked Patricia Owens, who manages the San Diego Sheriff's Regional Crime Laboratory what techniques she has developed over the years for photographing people, she thought this a rather tongue-in-cheek question, "well we deal a lot with people that aren't moving! It's very easy to associate them with an item of evidence,

²¹ The word means, "to lead across," from the Latin *transducere*, which combines *trans* (across) and *ducere* (to lead). "transducer, n." Oxford English Dictionary Online. Oxford University Press, accessed December 28, 2015, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/204675>.

²² "transducer, n." A Dictionary of Psychology. Oxford University Press, accessed December 19, 2015, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199657681.001.0001/acref-9780199657681-e-8519?rskey=MNSXdg&result=6>.

it's maybe just an inanimate object at that point to us."²³ Constituted as evidence in the context of crime scenes, dead bodies almost always present themselves to the camera horizontally in landscape orientation. This is in stark contrast to the majority of other genres of photographic portraiture where subjects orientate themselves vertically to the camera. As a consequence, in crime scene photography dead bodies are almost always photographed in landscape orientation rather than portrait orientation. This fact emerged during our conversation, when Patricia spoke about one of her most difficult cases since starting work at the Sheriff's Department eleven years ago:

I just recently had a suicide, a 14 year old hung himself and by the time we got there they had not cut him down and so he was still, um, hanging there. And when I was taking a close up of his face, like the head shot, I found it so weird. I felt like I was taking a portrait more than a crime scene photo and it was really disturbing.... so in some situations I do think about the camera. Because, I remember when I took the photograph I actually changed the direction of my camera, versus if he was laying on the ground I would have done it like this [horizontally] and done it more segmented, where in this situation it was much more appropriate to turn the camera this way [vertically] and that might have been the only reason that it effected me so much.

The change in camera orientation that the scene demands transduces a change in Patricia's emotional connection with her subject. As the energy of this emotionally charged scene transfers from the subject through the camera as transducer, it is manipulated—a manipulating that corresponds with the rotation of the camera itself.

²³ Apart from her position as a supervisor, Patricia also works crime scenes under the title of Senior Forensic Evidence Technician. A significant difference between photographers in San Diego and Los Angeles is that in San Diego police photographers are also responsible for collection and processing of evidence. At the LAPD this is a separate job handled by the Field Investigation Unit. Owens, Patricia. "Interview with Patricia Owens." By Alex Kershaw. *San Diego Sheriff's Regional Crime Laboratory* (2105).

This literal camera manipulation corresponds with a more psychological conversion, which is experienced through the camera by the photographer as a change in their emotional state. The camera's viewfinder frames this experience for Patricia as a portrait rather than a landscape, a quality that would not have been manifest in her own experience of the event independent of the camera. As Patricia explains, the reason that this felt unusual was that the camera brought her face-to-face with the young boy as a living subject in portrait orientation rather than her usual experience of photographing non-living objects in landscape orientation.²⁴ The effect of changing the camera orientation via which Patricia photographed the scene in front of her was that she became less able to treat the young boy as an item of evidence and was coerced into a more empathetic engagement with her subject. In other words, the effect of rotating her camera 90 degrees or so was that she was forced to recognize the young boy as a subject that was alive only hours earlier rather than her more routine practice of recognizing human subjects as objects of evidence.

By proposing the transducer as a model for the camera as a technology of affect, my debt to the work of Tim Ingold must be acknowledged. In *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*, Ingold proposes the transducer as a model for discussing the contribution of inanimate objects (he prefers the term matter) to practices of making.²⁵ Transducers “convert the ductus—the kinetic quality of the

²⁴ This is not to suggest that Patricia has no experience doing regular portraiture work. Apart from the photography that Patricia does outside of work, which mainly involves photographing her children at sporting events, she has regular experience shooting portraits of living suspects and victims at the Regional Crime Laboratory.

²⁵ It is worth noting that Bruno Latour's notion of a “mediator” is similar to Tim Ingold's notion of the transducer. For Latour, non-humans can take on the properties of either an intermediary or a mediator,

gesture, its flow or movement—from one register, of bodily kinesthesia, to another, of material flux.”²⁶ Ingold proposes the kite as one of his examples that is presented as an object that enables transduction between the human operator and the air in which it is suspended. Similarly, my proposition is that the camera acts as a transducer, often occupying the position of a fulcrum in the exchange between operator and subject/object during the times photographs are made. In these situations of conversion, the camera leverages variable and changeable intensities back and forth—continually redistributing the force of being acted upon and the forces that act upon being. According to Ingold, it’s not so much that the transducer activates agency, because this is already immanent in humans and objects, but that it converts their energies in a specific way. I would agree with Ingold, who views the notion of ascribing agency to objects as futile. Instead, Ingold frames the concept of agency in relation to the transducer by a perspective where we can see both humans and objects possessed by action, and where matter is ascribed its due course as an active participant. Approached in this way, the transducer mediates a correspondence that takes place between the other entities that are present in what Ingold calls the "dance of animacy."²⁷ This is a creative process where transducers "mix the movements of ones own sentient awareness with the flows and currents of animate life."²⁸ In a

for enabling social connection and activity spatiotemporally. Latour makes a distinction between intermediaries, which transport “meaning or force without transformation” and mediators that “transform, translate, distort, and modify the elements they are supposed to carry.” Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005: 39.

²⁶ Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*. Oxon: Routledge, 2013: 102.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 103.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

similar fashion, the camera establishes particular qualities of intersubjective experience, acting as a conduit by converting the physical and virtual registers that pass between people, places, and objects.

However, cameras are certainly very different to the examples Ingold uses, which apart from the kite include the toggle, the potters wheel, and the cello. One objection to adapting Ingold's model of the transducer for the camera might be that cameras moderate a less direct or immediate engagement due to their technological complexity. Furthermore, Ingold's characterization of the objects he chooses for transducers as "matter," is an uncomfortable substitute for the camera, which does not seem to connote the same plasticity. In claiming that it is possible for the camera and a cello to share the function of a transducer, Walter Benjamin's distinction between the photographer and the violinist is fitting.²⁹ For Benjamin, the photographer is unlike the violinist, who must seek out their note in an instant. The violinist has a certain freedom in that they are not subject to the same laws that face the photographer who has the advantage of operating a mechanical device, where errors can be corrected after the fact. In typically cryptic fashion Benjamin does not spell it out but we could infer that he suggests there might be greater scope for error in photographic processes. This presents itself as an inverted freedom, in that it is actually a constraint when compared to the creative immediacy of the violin. However, in the context of crime scene photography, there is little room for error. Once the crime scene photographer

²⁹ Walter Benjamin, "Little History of Photography." In *Selected Writings Volume 2, Part 2 1931-9134*, 507-30. Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005: 517.

has begun work, they are unable to delete any image as mandated by Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) designed to maintain the integrity of chain of evidence. More generally though, a prior knowledge of the flexibility for correcting mistakes in postproduction does not make the immediacy of the camera's presence any less palpable for those participating in the times photographs are made. Like the toggle, the potters wheel, and the cello, the camera is a tool that requires training, granting operators a chance to develop intimate relationships with the apparatus as they sharpen their techniques. Just because cameras do not resonate with the sonorous immediacy of acoustic vibrations, or the sporadic zippy animation of kites, does not make their potential for transduction any less plausible. This is particularly the case in the context of police photography where photographers and their cameras are thrown to the wind in unpredictably emotionally charged environments.

Police Photography: The Camera as Transducer in Photographic Events

In my remaining analysis I shall consider three ways the camera functions as a transducer as it lends its affordances to the time that images are co-produced in photographic events. As a means of grounding my analysis I will draw on research I have been engaged in with police photographers in San Diego and Los Angeles. Here the camera is considered as an object, as an apparatus performing its ‘intended’ function of producing photographs rather than a thing that exceeds its capacity for representation. I propose that these affordances the camera makes possible are properties that more appropriately (rather than exclusively) belong to the camera and as such contribute to the way photographic events are performed, structured, and experienced. Furthermore, in what I am calling the “photographic event,” I simply mean the time that images are made. At its most basic, the photographic event is constituted in and produces the time that photographs are made—a time that spans well beyond either side of the precise moments when the shutter release is pressed. The event is constituted through the intersection of at least three different entities—the camera, the photographer, and the subject framed in view. This triad includes human and non-human entities interfacing with one another—a conglomeration that is further co-dependent on the spaces in which these images are produced.

Transducing Doubt

My first proposition is that the camera’s unique ability to translate

multidimensional experience into a two-dimensional photograph transduces an exploratory process of doubt during photographic events. This doubt is manifest in the differential between the way the camera records a scene and the way the photographer experiences the scene. In this process the photographer doubts whether the camera might capture something in the scene that they do not notice and the doubt that the camera is not capturing the scene the way the photographer wants it to be experienced later on in the residual photograph. The capacity for the camera to record multiple images of the same scene enables photographers to harness this doubt as a means of both accepting and attempting to narrow or even accentuate the differential between these two modes of perceiving.³⁰

It is sometimes the case that the camera will capture something in a crime scene that the police photographer does not identify as an important piece of evidence at the time. This might later be used as a crucial support in securing a conviction in court. The camera's potential to capture things police photographers can't see serves to remind them of the need to harness a doubting of their own perceptive faculties as means of "looking for things they cannot see," or to "find things they did not know

³⁰ Vilem Flusser describes the act of photography as a kind of "phenomenological doubt." He argues that photography has a quantum nature in the sense the 'final' shot is a consequence of the total activity of taking multiple images. For Flusser, Cameras do not necessarily enable us to realize human intention. The tension is that while they may have been invented for this purpose, they serve to automate our activity, so instead we fulfill the functions of the program made available to us through the apparatus. Flusser understands doubt in the sense that when the camera is pointed at the world the photographer is faced with an endless number of possibilities or viewpoints as a means of approaching the world. Flusser contends that this doubt is prescribed by the structure of the camera's technical program that sets limitations for the photographer. Making images is not simply about what we want, but what we think we want in relation to the camera's capabilities. Vilem Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*. London: Reaktion Books, 2000.

they were looking for.”³¹ As Patricia Owens explains:

You need to take a moment and look at it [the scene] yourself, because you're so focused on the image you're taking and we need these certain sets of images. You know you've got your images, but do you know what's in them? I don't know, I don't know that you do all the time. I've come back here [her office] where I've uploaded photographs and I'm putting them on a CD and I'm looking at them on my computer monitor and I think, oh my gosh there's blood there on the handle for the turn signal on a vehicle, and I didn't notice, I didn't see it when I was there.³²

In recognition of the potential for the camera to record an important item of evidence that police photographers are not aware of at the time, SOPs mandate practices for ensuring that extensive “coverage” of the scene is made. Between 400-600 images are taken for a typical homicide and with more involved cases the number increases to around 1,200. In cases where police determine the death is not suspicious the number of images average around 300. This large quantity of images is generated through several distinct “passes” that capture the scene at differing scales. For example, in the case of a homicide in a domestic setting, the first pass is called the “approach,” which includes exterior shots that establish the context of the scene geographically. This includes photographing street signs and exterior shots that include the residence. The second pass involves the “overalls,” where the photographer sticks to the perimeter of each room obtaining total coverage by shooting back into the room with a wide-angle lens. The third pass covers the “details” which are photographs of things identified by the photographer as important pieces of evidence as well as shots that demonstrate the

³¹ This is how Scott Anderson, a police photographer at the LAPD Photography Unit described the process to me. Scott Anderson, "Interview with Scott Anderson." By Alex Kershaw. *Los Angeles Police Department, Scientific Investigations Division, Photography Unit* (2015).

³² Owens, "Interview."

relationship between each item of evidence and the interior space. These are usually done using normal and telephoto length lenses to achieve medium and close-up shots. Finally, a fourth pass of the scene might be made where the photographer alters the scene in order to secure further coverage not visible in previous images. For example, this might encompass opening drawers, cupboards or the refrigerator and moving items of furniture to reveal new aspects of the scene previously obscured. Each of these passes corresponds with the likelihood that the photographer's presence in the scene is altering its original condition. In part, the systematization of these SOPs are in place because it is doubtful the photographer will be aware of everything that is important to capture at the time of the event. This insurance policy is an acceptance of the advantages in the differential between what the camera records and what the photographer is capable of experiencing during their crime scene investigation.

In recognition of the importance of cultivating a sense of doubt police photographers regularly limit their exposure to the 'facts' of the case as a means limiting their potential for confirmation bias. On our way to a robbery at the Chase Bank in Encino, Los Angeles, I asked Scott Anderson of the LAPD Photography Unit, if he knew who the suspect was. Scott ambivalently replied, "he could have been a Martian for all I know."³³ Scott is expressly intentional about not listening to police "radio chatter" as he drives to the scene. The only section of the *LA Times* he is interested in reading are the feature articles, "because they are informed with solid

³³ Conversation with Scott Anderson on Friday the 13th of November 2015.

research, the facts have had time to be figured out, it's distilled."³⁴ From Scott's perspective, much of the information detectives or patrol officers might offer him as 'fact' turn out to be mere speculation. Unlike the detectives, who at that same moment are trying collect as many facts as possible, crime scene photographers are more interested in looking for what they can't see.

In terms of the things that photographers do see, there is also a doubt as to whether or not the camera is recoding the scene the way they want it to be experienced later. Engaged in their exploration of a crime scene, police photographers continually doubt whether the camera has successfully translated what they are experiencing into the images the apparatus chronicles. Given that the techno-optical limitations of the camera apparatus continually resist the intentionality of the photographer—they doubt whether what they are seeing will be made available for detectives and then a jury when their images are used as evidence during trial. For police photographers it is crucial that this translation process is accurately monitored. The images that police photographers produce forge a vital experiential link between the original crime scene and the processes of investigation that follow. This is more pronounced at the LAPD, where the detectives present during the initial crime scene investigations are not the same detectives that end up being assigned to the homicide. Unlike the San Diego Police Department (SDPD) and San Diego Sheriff's Department, investigating detectives at the LAPD first experience the crime through photographs of an event they have never personally witnessed. This is why it is so imperative for LAPD

³⁴ Ibid.

photographers to ensure that the translation of their experience of the scene has a logic to it that can be easily grasped.

In this translation process doubt is manifest due to the fact that every exposure involves a compromise between the three variables that control camera exposure. “Reciprocity” as a technical term in photography describes the inverse relationship between the quantity and duration of light that determines the reaction of light-sensitive material. In relation to the camera it characterizes the interchangeable equivalences between aperture, shutter speed and ISO as a means for controlling the total amount of light energy in proportion to the required exposure.³⁵ These three variables effect how the camera renders an equivalence between how the photographer experiences a scene and how the camera reproduces it. Aperture will affect how depth is rendered, while the shutter speed controls how motion is registered. Thus, the images that are captured through the camera are not the same ‘images’ that the photographer sees through the viewfinder or on the LCD screen. The latitude of the 35mm DSLR cameras that police photographers use is much narrower than human vision. The instantaneous dynamic range of the human eye is around 10-14 stops, which surpasses the 8-stop range of their digital cameras. Thus, the photographer needs to undertake acts of translation where they reimagine the scene in light of the much more limited dynamic range of the camera, which registers a vastly more compressed tonal range. While gradual variations in tonal range may appear as quite distinct to human vision, these same fields when plotted as numeric values between 0

³⁵ For example, in reciprocity an increase in the amount of light through the aperture is exactly compensated by a decrease of exposure time by the same factor through the shutter speed.

(black) and 255 (white) become drastically less discrete. The result is that the camera clips sections of a scene (usually either at the shadow or highlight end of the spectrum) that are otherwise available to the photographer. The camera in this instance requires the photographer to doubt their own perception of the scene and then make adjustments to values they set on the camera, as a means of bringing forth select portions of the scene that they feel are most important. In this way, the mathematical laws of photographic reciprocity set limitations that catalyze a more plastic reciprocity of doubting that plays out between photographers and their cameras.

Furthermore, framing decisions and the choice of focal length are significant factors at play as photographers doubt their translation of a scene. Police photographers are essentially “making a film one frame at a time.”³⁶ Thus, they must continually doubt the efficacy of their next photograph before they take it to make sure that it counts as an essential frame that contributes to the logic of their overall narrative sequence:

Sequencing plays a big part in what we are doing, we take a lot of photos where we’ll take one photo just to show a location, cause then we move in real close, and if you only have that really close photo you wouldn’t know maybe where you’re at. So we look back to the photo previous, to say ok now where was I when I took that photo in order to take the next photo.³⁷

³⁶ Owens, "Interview." This notion of doubt is compounded with regard to the way that police photographers invoke the rhetoric of ‘objectivity’ to describe their approach to documenting the scene, but at the same time maintain that ‘creativity’ is an essential component in being able to tell the story of the crime, even though this happens prior to extensive investigation where the facts of the case have had time to establish themselves.

³⁷ Ibid.

Thus, as the camera is applied within a scene it constantly experiments with trying out different framing possibilities before the shutter is pressed in order to create a logical sequence that accurately captures the story of the crime. Unlike almost all other genres of photography, this process is intensified for police photographers who are quite literally telling their story in-camera as a consequence of being unable to erase their images. This process becomes exploratory in the sense that in framing, as the camera grasps one thing something else slips out of view.³⁸ Thus, the camera's view must constantly be recalibrated by temporarily fixing and then releasing—experimenting with potential views of the scene in order to best accommodate and capture important relationships between objects and subjects confined within its view. Part of this process involves what Patricia Owens calls “setting the camera down,” where the photographer's ‘looking’ oscillates between experiencing the scene for themselves and experiencing it through the viewfinder:

At some point you need to say, I'm going to take ten minutes and *I'm* going to look at this scene, because I think so many times, we're like you know, like let's get busy, let's start doing the work, and so we start taking photographs and I'm so habitual in the photographs that I take, I just walk into a room and I do the thing that I do every single time. So am I seeing everything that's there through the viewfinder? A lot of times I feel like I don't. And if I don't take the time to do that, and say I'm gonna set the camera down and I'm going to look for myself, I'll walk away from the scene and I'll think what just happened there, like I didn't even know, like I didn't even see what was going on there, its in my photos and looking back at my photos I'll see it, but when I am there in the moment I feel like I really consciously have to set the camera down and say ok now let *me* look.³⁹

³⁸ John Szarkowski has suggested that the choice and elimination in framing is the central act of photography. John Szarkowski, "Introduction to the Photographer's Eye." In *The Photography Reader*, edited by Liz Wells. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.

³⁹ Owens, "Interview."

Thus, behind any ‘single’ image of a crime scene is an accumulation of hundreds of other possible images produced as the photographer continually recalibrates and questions how their experience of experiencing is being recorded by the camera. The reason almost all cameras and their subsidiary equipment is black, is to absorb instances of reflected light exterior to the frame that might be deflected back through the lens. This conceals the fact that these other surfaces and views prevented from sneaking into the final frame had at one time been considered. Thus, the camera does not simply capture the scene—but facilitates a negotiation of doubt with the scene.

In their choice of focal length (which controls the differing effects of optical magnification), the police photographer is given the opportunity to re-sculpt the relative size of objects visible within the lenses’ angle of view. David Atkins, Supervising Crime Scene Specialist at the SDPD Crime Laboratory, discusses his use of this technique, stating, “for example, if you had a gun on a bed you would want to take a picture showing the overall room, but then you would want to, kind of focus on that gun, zoom in and drop your f-stop down to kind of blur out the background so if your jury sees it they know what you’re looking at on the bed, it will draw your eye in.”⁴⁰ In this way, David is conscious of the potential for using the effects of magnification as a means of producing images that will accentuate the differential between camera vision and human vision in order to produce an image that has a dramatic resonance with a jury when his photographs appear as evidence in court. This constant differential between what photographers *actually* see and the way they

⁴⁰ David Atkins, "Interview with David Atkins." By Alex Kershaw. *The San Diego Police Department, Crime Laboratory* (2015).

imagine what they see will be rendered by the camera keeps the process of doubt in play. The doubt that the camera makes manifest, demands constant modifications to where and how the photographer looks and the modifications they make to its settings. So while the final decision to press the shutter release is decisive, it is a decision made via the accumulation of prior relays between decisiveness and indecisiveness embroiled in a process of doubt. Even at the time of shooting, these decisions are often multiple and unresolved. Thus, a crime scene accumulates through a palimpsest of images (both real and imagined) as photographers make several passes, continually aware of the fact that they don't really know what they are looking for until they begin looking with the camera.

Transducing Somatic Effects

My second proposition is that the camera transduces specific somatic effects on photographers and their subjects during photographic events. It should come as no surprise that cameras are designed with expectations as to how they are to be used. Photographers must then develop particular strategies for incorporating the camera into the ways one's body is already capable of articulating itself. In this way, as Nigel Thrift suggests, the body can't be counted separately from the world of tools. For Thrift, as we have co-evolved with tools they have subsequently produced changes in our physiology, "indeed, the evidence suggests that organs like the hand, the gut, and various other muscle and nerve complexes which have evolved in part in response to the requirements of tools have subsequently produced changes in the brain. The

human body is a tool-being.”⁴¹ Thrift conceives bodies as effects of the tools to which they respond and participate. More specifically, in relation to the camera as a tool, Jean Rouch argued that technical innovations during World War II led to the development of lightweight 16mm film cameras, which made it possible for ethnographers to become more mobile.⁴² The ability to use the camera off the tripod resulted in the birth of handheld filmmaking where, “instead of using the zoom, the cameraman-director can really get into the subject.”⁴³ Rouch named this effect the “cine-trance,” which granted ethnographers more improvisational and participatory engagements with their subjects. Rouch describes the “cine-trance” as a “strange state of transformation that takes place in the filmmaker,”⁴⁴ which he likened to the phenomena of possession. It connotes a “participating camera” and describes the intimate reciprocity and improvisational flow between movements of the camera operators’ body and that of the camera, where the camera apparatus and body merge more closely. However, Rouch’s desire to merge the movements of his own body with that of the camera (which he also likened to ballet), in order to win the confidence of his subjects seems rather distant from the work of police photographers. Perhaps, rather than the fluidity of a cinematic ballet, police photographer’s choreography might more accurately be described as a form of photographic capoeira.

Apart from the immobile bodies that police photographers experience at crime scenes, they are also involved in regular photographic engagements with animate

⁴¹ Nigel Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*. Oxon: Routledge, 2008: 10.

⁴² Jean Rouch, "The Camera and Man." In *Cine-Ethnography*, 29-46. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

bodies. This includes graduation ceremonies, the “grip and grins”⁴⁵ of publicity photographs for major public affairs events, aerial work, as well as studio work with suspects, and victims of violent crime. In the studio, their engagements with subjects are shaped by the camera technologies they use. This is apparent in the Suspect Processing Room at the SDPD, where between 150-200 people are photographed each year. It is a fairly small room as far as portrait studios go—measuring only 70 square feet. The atmosphere is fittingly somber with its scuffed white walls and cheap incandescent lights that illuminate a baby blue backdrop (the same color used by the Department of Motor Vehicles for drivers license photographs). When photographers are working in the studio with suspects there is at least one, though more commonly two police officers present. Either a patrol officer and/or a detective is in attendance, acting as a kind of secretary—jotting down the times when certain things happen and recording anything the suspect says. However, as David Atkins explains, it’s “more about safety, they [the officer(s)] will just stand there and watch to make sure we don’t get killed.”⁴⁶ There are also risks associated with the potential transmission of diseases like tuberculosis, HIV, and hepatitis. When David first began working for the SDPD 15 years ago, he only had access to wide-angle 18-35mm zoom lenses. As a result, David was regularly placed in situations where he had to get within very close physical proximity to his subjects, often suspects of violent crime. This involved shooting identifying marks on the suspect’s body for comparative analysis, such as scratch marks, bloodied knuckles, bruises or knife cuts. This was not without its

⁴⁵ Berner, "Interview."

⁴⁶ Atkins, "Interview."

hazards, as David explains, “some things that you would probably like to do with a close-up lens, you probably shouldn’t do with a close up lens in here.”⁴⁷ In these situations where he was brought within striking range of the suspect, there were times when David “took a few hits to the gut,”⁴⁸ was bitten, was spat on, and once kicked in the face.

In order to mitigate the dangers this presented to his body, David developed a simple technique. Rather than facing the subject, David would turn his body side-on (always toward the opposite side of where his gun was holstered), thus presenting less surface area for the suspect to potentially make contact with. In particular, this position protected his groin region, which was a favored target. These days, the body techniques he developed early on in his career extend to his subjects. With sex crime offenders for example, when David needs to get a close-up of their crotch region, he will ask them to put one leg up on a desk before moving in for the shot so they can’t strike out at him without losing balance and falling over. The flexibility of now being able to use an 18-135mm zoom lens means that he does not always have to get as close to his subjects as he once did. Instead, David is able to maintain a more distanced position that fixes him in a single location in the room as he zooms in—moving the relative distance between glass components in the lens barrel rather than his body. Unlike Rouch’s aversion to the zoom lens, the SDPD’s acquisition of this technology was something David welcomed—and unlike Rouch’s desire to get closer to his subjects, David is much more comfortable further away.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

However, there are still times when having to get up “close up and personal”⁴⁹ is unavoidable, and so David still uses these techniques—for example, when he needs a particular perspective that can only be achieved at close proximity or for detail shots where he must be no further than 18 inches away in order to achieve the minimum of 1,000 pixels worth of resolution required by SOPs. David describes his technique for moving his body side-on as having become a “totally automatic thing,”⁵⁰ to the degree that he often forgets to share this knowledge with new trainees. This technique has become habituated to such a degree that it follows him beyond the workplace:

I shoot a lot of stuff for my church, just volunteer stuff. And I’ll go to do a portrait of somebody and out of habit from here [the Suspect Processing Room], I come up side on and I am kind of like [he makes a gesture with his eyes where he scans an imaginary person] look around, and I am kind of like, oh I’m sorry I was just lookin’ around to see where your hands were, sorry wrong environment!⁵¹

Thus, the camera’s effect on David’s body has become ingrained to the extent where he uses the same techniques he developed in the Suspect Processing Room when doing volunteer work for his church group. While Rouch’s notion of the “cine-trance” may have seemed like a stretch at first, it does appear that the camera can enact a form of possession via its ability to transduce somatic effects on the photographer—producing an affect that becomes distilled through the photographer’s ongoing bodily relationship with the camera. In the context of both ethnographic filmmaking and police photography, this is a relationship that becomes habituated through training.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Thus, the camera's effect on the body in one context can continue to transduce similar effects in new contexts even to the degree where it no longer makes sense for the body to behave in such a way.

In a different way, cameras possess the capacity to transduce specific somatic effects in the bodies of subjects apprehended within its frame. Subjects know that the camera can make them something more or something less than who they say they are. Photographers make decisions about the kind of camera that she or he will use and the way it is mounted or held based on the knowledge that it will place different pressures on the subject. A more professional looking camera may be used in a circumstance where the photographer wants to demonstrate respect for the subject being photographed—one that is equivalent to the important person they say they are. Conversely, a smaller and less imposing camera might be used in situations where the photographer wishes to generate a more convivial atmosphere. Smaller focal length lenses can be used to reduce the distance between the subject and camera to make for a more intimate encounter. As subjects present themselves as objects before the camera there is a sense that one will always be prevented from being their own thing because of the knowledge that one has of themselves. For Roland Barthes the essential and discomfiting paradox of posing for photographs, happens when the desire for the photographic image to "coincide" with his "profound self" can never be realized. This essential self is never reproducible, instead, "the photograph is the advent of myself as other: a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity."⁵² In the subject's

⁵² Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1981: 12.

experience of being recognized they feel the camera's encroachment on their being and are made conscious of their own responsibility in authoring an idealized likeness of themselves. As Barthes acknowledges, when "I feel myself observed by the lens, everything changes: I constitute myself in the process of 'posing,' I instantaneously make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image."⁵³ As subjects imagine themselves in the image yet-to-be they experience a heightened bodily awareness and transform themselves into poses which belong to other bodies. As Barthes notes, changes in gesture, expression or posture as a result of being photographed can be described as a process of self-othering. However, this othering is not necessarily submissive, instead it might manifest as resistance or subterfuge. It involves a process synesthesia, in the sense that bodily changes are accumulative, where a sensation in one part of the body produced by the stimulus of the camera is then applied to another part of the body. Similarly, Richard Schusterman has coined the term "transfiguring intensity"⁵⁴ to describe how the bodily actions of the photographer and their handling of the camera is infectious in producing a heightened sense of the subject's proprioception. Conceived somewhat differently, Vilém Flusser uses the term "affected behavior" to describe the way the subject manipulates themselves for the camera and photographer, which is a mixture of "reserve and exhibitionism."⁵⁵ Unlike other representational media this is perhaps more palpably felt in practices of photography where the differential between brevity and

⁵³ Ibid., 10.

⁵⁴ Richard Shusterman, "Photography as Performative Process." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 70, no. 1, Winter (2012): 70.

⁵⁵ Vilém Flusser, *Gestures*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2014: 82.

permanence is so acute. What I mean by this is that the camera transduces the awareness in subjects that the moments in which they have available to burn themselves into the image are so brief in comparison to the much longer duration in which they will be permanently preserved in the image.

As a result of the anxiety that manifests in subjects as they try to prepare themselves for images, cameras have the ability to transduce an experience of time that is out of sync with the subject's own experience of time. To illustrate this point, I will describe a photographic trick I witnessed in the portrait studio at the LAPD's Photography Unit. On this particular occasion, one of the "top-brass" as Scott Anderson described his subject, came in to have their portrait taken for inclusion in an interdepartmental publication on surveillance techniques. It suffices to say that things were not going particularly well. Scott could just not seem to get his subject to pose the way he wanted. As time went on, for much too long, as far as the sitter was concerned their frustration became evident. As Scott's camera kept on clicking away... and his subject kept on trying to do his thing (with a diminishing enthusiasm that stemmed mostly from embarrassment)... Scott's camera kept on clicking away to no avail. So to fix the problem Scott's trick was to ask his subject to take a deep breath, pause, close his eyes, and count to three. When he was finished he should open his eyes at which point Scott took another snap. This technique might be one that Walter Benjamin had in mind when he noted that as faster camera optics developed the portrait photographer had to coax the aura out of the sitter, who previously had been

able to grow into the image during the much longer exposure times.⁵⁶ My reading of the situation in the LAPD portrait studio is that Scott's subject is displaced by their experience of the way that the camera segments time. So in order to fix the problem Scott asks his subject to recalibrate himself (back into his own time) in order to re-face the camera reinvigorated. This is necessary because subjects are unable to experience the time of being photographed on their own terms. As they attempt to coordinate themselves into the precise moment that the shutter fires, they are never really sure if they have been able to achieve an image of themselves that they will be pleased with. The subject experiences this viscerally through the sound of the mirrored shutter opening and closing. The sound of the camera's shutter marks discrete units of time, that sit on either side of a single second that is further cut into a fraction of itself. In this way the camera lays claim to the subject's experience of this time, which is continually being measured with the mechanical precision of the camera's technical disposition.⁵⁷ The subject perceives these moments of time in-between each clap of the shutter as being longer than they actually are, but always not long enough. That is,

⁵⁶ Benjamin, "Little History of Photography," 517.

⁵⁷ I would also argue that this is the reason several commercial photographers, particularly in the fields of sports and fashion photography have been experimenting with using video cameras in place of a traditional stills camera. For example, commercial photographer Kevin Arnold has blogged about the advantages of using high-resolution 5K video cameras for his work. Writing about a 2012 sports shoot Arnold discusses the advantages of shooting on a Red Epic camera, "what I hadn't anticipated going into this was the advantages this style of shooting would offer in terms of capturing natural expressions and key moments. Obviously, when you're shooting 120 frames-per-second, it's almost impossible to miss a moment. But there's more to it. Shooting video is comparably silent and, without the constant clicking of the shutter reminding them that their every movement was being recorded, the athletes were able to forget I was there. This is huge when you're striving for authentic, candid images, a hallmark of my work." 5K refers to the horizontal pixel count of a stills video file. The resolution of a 5K video frame is almost 14 megapixels (5120 x 2700 in the Red Epic). This is more than enough resolution to meet standards for print publication. The company themselves now markets the Red Epic as video camera for stills work on commercial fashion shoots. Kevin Arnold, "Is It Time to Eliminate Stills from Your Shoot?," 27th April 2012, accessed November 19, 2015, <http://aphotoeditor.com/2012/05/15/is-it-time-to-eliminate-stills-from-your-shoot/>.

never long enough to grow into the image. Thus, the sound of the shutter first punctuates, extends, then truncates the expressive cycle of the subject, transducing somatic effects that hold them to the anxious ransom that the person they know themselves to be might not be the same as the person recorded by the camera.

Transducing Tasks that Filter Empathy

My final proposition is that the camera transduces the ability to manage the quality of empathetic recognition that photographers grant their subjects in photographic events. The potential for the cameras to drive a wedge between participants in photographic events—turning photographic subjects into photographed objects—has been well documented. Without repeating the arguments in full here, it is suffice to say, this has been well theorized in relation to the camera's alienating effects in processes where it performs as an apparatus of automatism and objectivity, amplifying the alterity of the subjects it captures. As Jane Collins and Catherine Lutz suggest, the camera occupies a space between the photographer and subject that is characterized by distance and alienation.⁵⁸ However, as far as police photographers are concerned any investment in trying to narrow this psychic and sensual distance is not necessarily advisable. The relationship police photographers have with their subjects is unusual—in homicide cases, their subjects already begin as objects and the audience for their images is virtually non-existent. Police photographers regularly speak of their desire to treat the lifeless bodies they photograph with respect and to be careful about

⁵⁸ Jane Collins and Catherine Lutz, "The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes: The Example of National Geographic." In *Visualizing Theory: Selected Essays from V.A.R. 1990-1994*, edited by Lucien Taylor, 363-84. New York: Routledge, 1994: 367.

how much they use humor as a coping strategy on the job due to its potential to seem callous when voiced before the uninitiated. However, at the same time, there seems little point in trying to connect with the victims they photograph because the possibilities for generating a reciprocal relationship with their ‘objects’ is tremendously reduced if not morbidly occult. What is the point in trying to create a more empathetic engagement with their subjects? What is the point in attempting to secure their subject’s trust or instilling greater confidence in the subject’s view of their abilities? The simple answer is that they don’t need to. Given the wretched situations they are called on to document—circumstances of intense emotion teeming with cruelty, misery, abuse, or just heartbreakingly shitty luck—it is a lot easier for police photographers to develop a heightened empathetic sensibility. Especially for a subject turned object that is no longer capable of resisting their gaze.

In this context, police photographers need to manage their empathy. They need to strike a productive balance between generating too much empathy and having too little empathy. In circumstances where the photographer is overwhelmed with empathy for the victim or in the opposite case where they feel nothing, photographers are prevented from being able to get the job done. David Atkins believes that the ability to sit in the middle of the empathy spectrum is an essential quality for the makings of a successful police photographer. Patricia Owens, has described the certain amount of empathy that a photographer needs for the victim as motivating her to remain passionate about doing whatever is best for the case. It encourages her to make sure that she stays mindful of getting all the necessary shots during a shoot. At the

other end of the spectrum, Michael Berner recalls his last day on the job as a photographer as the day he realized that he lost the ability to forge even the smallest modicum of empathy with the victim he was photographing. Bent over the face of a 15-year-old kid lying dead on the sidewalk, staring at the bullet wound in the side of his forehead, it dawned on Michael that the job was becoming too routine. The numbness of not feeling anything anymore terrified Michael and he next day he requested a transfer into the supervisor's position he has now occupied for the past 13 years.

As an antidote, the camera provides photographers opportunities to manage their empathy toward the middle of the spectrum, by enabling them to remain preoccupied with technical and compositional considerations during shoots. As photographers busy themselves with choices associated with framing and the various options for camera settings, the camera operates as a kind of filter, working as a blockage that prevents overly empathetic states from manifesting. In pressing the material thingness of a camera up to one's face police photographers buffer the engagements with their subjects. As the eye locates the viewfinder and peers through, certain parts of the scene are removed from view that the photographer could clearly see with their own eyes just moments before. The camera's framing is constantly experimented with through changes in the position of their body and adjustments their fingers and hands make to the focal length of the lens. The relay between these two modes of seeing in framing is constantly in operation as the photographer circulates around the scene and the items of evidence located within it. As the photographer's

looking is continually mediated through the camera, they are forced to pay attention to certain details within the scene at the expense of other details. This accentuates the experience of certain elements and suppresses others. For example, while the subject's position relative to an item of evidence may be noticed the specific details of the subject's posture or injuries may not be. Furthermore, these compositional considerations are simultaneously at work as the photographer attends to alterations in shutter speed, ISO, aperture, and settings on their flash—entrusting photographers with a set of busying tasks that must be undertaken to tell their story. Michael Berner developed his own signature style that kept him busy during shoots “to keep the story going”⁵⁹ in order to present a more complete narrative of how the whole crime scene fit together. Michael's technique was that as he moved from one shot to another he made certain that some portion of the same material thing reappeared in each consecutive photograph. Michael put to use whatever was available at the scene—whether it was a fence post, a number on the ground, a car tire, or body part as a reference point to tie each of his shots together:

My whole being of when I was working was I'm concentrating on composition, tying the next shot into the first, making sure my exposure's correct, making sure it's lit properly, making sure everything is gonna be there and it's gonna be visible... You've got so much going on you don't have a whole lotta time to be emotionally involved with what's going on, to be emotionally involved and intimate. I find I have a hard time with there even being an intimacy because of all the variables of being a photographer, you've gotta get this, you've got too many other things going on in your mind... you've got to divorce yourself from the *actual* emotion of what's going on.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Berner, "Interview."

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Preoccupied with best composing and exposing choice elements of a scene in order to tell his story, the camera mitigated the potential for Michael to develop an overly empathetic engagement with his subject. Michael's attention to camera details often prevented him from experiencing the more macabre elements of the crime scene that he only noticed after the fact when reviewing the images as they came off the printer. Thus 'seeing' through the camera is heightened at the expense of feeling less—seeing as a form of blindness that suppresses a more emotive acknowledgement. This is marked by the tension between the photographer's desire to maintain the impossibility of 'objectivity' in situations that are supremely intimate. As Patricia Owens makes clear, this is not an objectivity easily cultivated, "we really *really* have to make that concentrated effort to really just be objective and not bring our own feeling and emotion into it and just show the crime for what it is."⁶¹ It is an objectivity that photographers try to foster through developing their technique—techniques focused on solving the puzzle of the crime to award a different kind of recognition that might more accurately be described as justice or an acknowledgment of the responsibility crime scene photographers feel toward their victims.

⁶¹ Owens, "Interview."

Conclusion

The camera is both a thing and an object. As the LAPD Photo Unit's camera collection demonstrates, cameras like photographs can elicit memories of the past. In the case of the Mamiya RB67 Pro-S, we see the camera's potential to perform as a thing in moments that exceed its 'proper' purpose as a technology of representation—that is, as a body-thing and puzzle-thing. However, in its more familiar state as an object, the camera transduces a variety of affects on photographers and subjects during the time that images are made. As Michael Berner puts it, "we think rectangularly."⁶² As the experience of police photographers in San Diego and Los Angeles shows, this rectangular thinking that cameras transduce as a technology of affect includes its ability to instigate exploratory process of photographic doubt. Specifically, the doubt that the camera will apprehend an item of evidence that the photographer does not notice as well as the photographer's uncertainty of their ability to translate their experience of the crime scene via the camera which records it quite differently. The camera is also capable of transducing somatic effects on both photographers and subjects by setting specific techno-optical limitations for police photographers whose bodies respond with innovative somatic techniques that become habituated. In addition, the camera transduces an experience of time for subjects that is out of sync with the time of their own bodies. Finally, the camera affords police photographers the ability to manage empathetic recognition with victims of crime by enabling them to remain preoccupied with composition and exposure considerations during their

⁶² Berner, "Interview."

documentation of the scene.

More broadly, the example of police photography serves to untether the camera from the image, where we witness it performing as much more than a technology of representation. Photographs are negotiated *with* and *through* the camera and not simply implemented *by* the camera. If we were privy to the photographs police photographers take, I suspect that the effects of the camera discussed here would be but barely visible. Of course, the fact that these photographic events are concealed by images should come as no surprise given that photographs replace events more than they represent or signify them. Nonetheless, when apprehended by the magic of photographs, in what has been characterized as their 'reality effect,' we cannot help but try to taste something of that original encounter. In this process though, the immanence of the photographic event is replaced by our desire for the photograph to function as an index. While there is no doubt that these exchanges leave their imprint on photographs, it is not the impression of an easily identifiable fingerprint but something far more indeterminate. While photographic events may be only marginally available to us in images it should not mean we give up on the original encounter. Thus, rather than working backwards from the image, there is great potential for future scholarship that chooses to work forward from the event—as it is here in the times and places where images are made that a little known phantom of photography might be found.

Works Cited

- Anderson, Scott. "Interview with Scott Anderson." By Alex Kershaw. *Los Angeles Police Department, Scientific Investigations Division, Photography Unit* (2015).
- Arnold, Kevin. "Is It Time to Eliminate Stills from Your Shoot?," 27th April 2012, accessed November 19, 2015, <http://aphotoeditor.com/2012/05/15/is-it-time-to-eliminate-stills-from-your-shoot/>.
- Atkins, David. "Interview with David Atkins." By Alex Kershaw. *The San Diego Police Department, Crime Laboratory* (2015).
- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1981.
- Belting, Hans "Image, Medium, Body: A New Approach to Iconology." *Critical Inquiry* 31 (Winter), no. 2 (2005): 302-19.
- Benjamin, Walter. "Little History of Photography." In *Selected Writings Volume 2, Part 2 1931-9134*, 507-30. Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Berner, Michael. "Interview with Michael Berner." By Alex Kershaw. *Los Angeles Police Department, Scientific Investigations Division, Photography Unit* (2015).
- Brown, Bill. "Thing Theory." *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (2001): 1-22.
- Collins, Jane and Catherine Lutz "The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes: The Example of National Geographic." In *Visualizing Theory: Selected Essays from V.A.R. 1990-1994*, edited by Lucien Taylor, 363-84. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Edwards, Elizabeth and Janice Hart, ed. *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images*. London; New York: Routledge, 2004.

Flusser, Vilém. *Gestures*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2014

_____. *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*. London: Reaktion Books, 2000.

Friedberg, Anne. *The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009.

Gell, Alfred. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 1998.

Graves-Brown, Paul, ed. *Matter, Materiality and Modern Culture*. London; New York: Routledge, 2000.

Ingold, Tim. *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*. Oxon: Routledge, 2013.

Jay, Martin. "Magical Nominalism: Photography and the Re-Enchantment of the World." *Culture, Theory & Critique* 50, no. 2-3 (2009): 165-83.

Knappett, Carl. *Thinking through Material Culture*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005.

Latour, Bruno. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

_____. "Technology Is Society Made Durable." In *Sociology of Monsters: Essays on Power, Technology and Domination* edited by John Law, 103-32. London; New York: Routledge, 1991.

_____. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge and Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991.

"Mamiya RB67 Pro SD," MamiyaLeaf, accessed November 19, 2015, http://www.mamiyaleaf.com/legacy_RB67.asp.

Mitchell, W.J.T. *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

_____. 1996. "What Do Pictures "really" Want?". *October* 77. The MIT Press: 71–82.

Oguibe, Olu. *The Culture Game*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

Owens, Patricia. "Interview with Patricia Owens." By Alex Kershaw. *San Diego Sheriff's Regional Crime Laboratory* (2105).

Rouch, Jean. *Cine-Ethnography*. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

Shusterman, Richard. "Photography as Performative Process." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 70, no. 1, Winter (2012): 67-77.

Summers, David. "Representation." In *Critical Terms for Art History*, edited by Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, 3-16. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Szarkowski, John. "Introduction to the Photographer's Eye." In *The Photography Reader*, edited by Liz Wells. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.

Thrift, Nigel. *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*. Oxon: Routledge, 2008.

Turner, Victor. *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*. New York: PAJ Publications, 1982.