

Painting Digital Photography

Painting Digital Photography:

Synthesis and Difference in the Age of Media Equivalence

Edited by

Carl Robinson

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



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This book first published 2018

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-5275-1110-3
ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-1110-1

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Eleven authors, writing in their individual styles about challenging and interrelated subjects, have contributed the essays that comprise this book. This has created a complex work, and I am indebted to Jane Fletcher for meticulously and scrupulously proofreading and sub-editing the entire collection. The challenge of achieving uniformity across the whole, whilst ensuring each contributor's voice has been retained, was an especially difficult task and I am thankful that Jane was prepared to work so hard on this. I would also like to thank Eleanor Letham for painstakingly sub-proofreading the texts in order to ensure consistency with the formatting. Rodger Brown, Bridget Robinson and Professor Huw Davies provided further feedback on the essays and I thank them for their engagement and invaluable comments that helped shape the book.

My thanks go to QUAD Arts Centre's Senior Curator, Peter Bonnell, for agreeing to host, and then co-coordinate the staging of, the first *PaintingDigitalPhotography* conference. Without Peter's enthusiasm the conference may never have happened and this book would not have materialised. I am grateful to all the staff at QUAD who made that day a success, and University of Derby undergraduate Fine Art students Jas Lucas, Richard Laphorn, Jeannean Howe-McCartin and Shannon-Lea Stevenson who generously gave their time assisting with it. Gemma Marmalade and Dr. Philip Harris, as the Chairs of the conference, encouraged the speakers to explore their ideas beyond their presentations and I wish to thank them for their enthusiasm and experience in navigating proceedings through the day.

Funding for both the conference and research toward this book was generously provided by the University of Derby Arts and Humanities Research Funding Panel. I want to express my gratitude to the Panel for its generous financial support and Professor Chris White for encouragement in applying for funding in the first place.

Lastly, and most importantly, I am extremely grateful to all the contributors at the conference and authors of the essays included here. Without their willingness to share their ideas around the fascinating connections between contemporary painting, the digital and photography this book would never have seen the light of day. This is to thank them for making this possible.

INTRODUCTION

CARL ROBINSON

We live in an age of “media equivalence” where art made with the aid of a technical device has the same artistic recognition as that created with the traditional mediums of painting and sculpture.¹ But we also live in the digital age where “the digital” encompasses all, and the mediums of art are inextricably bound in its pervasive code. With digital devices to hand and user-friendly interfaces to experiment with, artists are exploring ever-greater possibilities of new creative practices. And, the tested relationship that painting and photography had through the analogue age is being reshaped through the rapidly expanding possibilities of digital interconnectivity. Now artists and theorists are being challenged to redefine the boundaries of, and associations between, these mediums. It is this interconnectivity—between painting, digitisation and photography in contemporary art practices—that the *PaintingDigitalPhotography* conference began to explore.²

The idea for that event came from research I was undertaking into the late works of Richard Hamilton (1922-2011) in which he had painted representationally in oils directly onto the digital photographic print.³ Hamilton’s conjoining of a “traditional” medium and the latest digital technology was part of a developing fine art dialogue.⁴ As Isabelle Graw and Ewa Lajer-Burcharth state:

¹ See: Peter Weibel, “The Postmedia condition”, *Metamute*, published March 19, 2012, <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/lab/post-media-condition>.

² “Conference: PaintingDigitalPhotography”, Quad, last modified May 9, 2017, <https://www.derbyquad.co.uk/events/conference--paintingdigitalphotography.aspx>. See also: Carl Robinson, “PaintingDigitalPhotography”, accessed February 25, 2018, <https://crobinson40.wixsite.com/paintdigphoto>.

This book comes out of the conference. Some of the presentations at the event are included here as essays, with additional texts not included on the day having been added.

³ For example, *Portrait of a Woman as an Artist*, (2007).

⁴ Hamilton painted in a representational manner with its strong art historical associations. According to Hal Foster, by doing this, Hamilton was “testing” paint-

What we witness in contemporary art practice is engagement with different, deliberately heterogeneous modes and conventions of making that often enter in a productive clash, a tense conversation with one another.⁵

In preparing the conference it became apparent that much contemporary practical and theoretical research is being undertaken into the relationship of *either* painting and the digital *or* photography and the digital.⁶ However, there appeared to be little in the academic literature, or in art practices generally, that investigates painting and photography's *relationship to one another through* the digital. Most artists working in these areas, even whilst engaging with the digital, nevertheless align to one medium or the other and wish to be seen as either painters or photographers. This is understandable given the weight of historical continuity bearing down on today's painting and photographic practices. There are pressures from the art world and its need for delineation of disciplines into understandable categories. And differences are further defined, in the United Kingdom at least, through discrete "Fine Art" or "Photography" degrees that orientate future artists to work within specific subject areas. It could be argued that Hamilton, whilst deploying the digital photographic print in his late practice,⁷ very much wanted to be recognised as a painter in the western European tradition.⁸

Yet even though attempts at re-anchoring painting and photography continue, the tangible connections between these mediums have become more manifest since digitisation slipped between, surrounded and enmeshed the two. The languages and cultural dialogues of painting and photography have always inflected one another, but the connectivity that

ing—as a practice and medium—through its relationship to technological media including the digital. See: Hal Foster, "The Hamilton Test", in the *Richard Hamilton Retrospective* exhibition catalogue (London: Tate Publishing, 2014).

⁵ Isabelle Graw and Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, *Painting beyond itself: the medium in the post-medium condition* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016), 8-9.

⁶ The connections between digital technologies, art and aesthetics is under investigation by contemporary theorists and writers, with Lev Manovich being perhaps at the forefront of these commentators. See: Lev Manovich, "Lev Manovich", accessed February 25, 2018, <http://manovich.net>.

⁷ Hamilton's late work *does* combine photography, digital manipulation and painting.

⁸ In 1978 Hamilton noted, "The idea that you're competing with Oldenburg or Warhol...these...judgments are quite absurd. You are really competing with Rembrandt, Velasquez and Poussin...That's the kind of time span that art is all about [...]": Richard Morphet, "Richard Hamilton: The Longer View," *Richard Hamilton* (London: Tate Gallery, 1992), 18.

the digital brings now enables these mediums to be linked in ways previously unimaginable.⁹ As painting and photography are being shaped in relation to the digital, a potential cross-pollination of disciplines is beginning to take place, and practices are beginning to explore a complex set of relations between these mediums: painting's relation to digital, photography's relation to digital, painting's and photography's direct connection to one another and—perhaps more challengingly—digital's connection to both painting and photography combined.¹⁰ Artists such as Wade Guyton (b.1972) actively exploit these connections by creating new syntheses between, for instance, digital image capture, printing and the use of “traditional” supports (such as canvas).¹¹ This embracing of digital technologies in the creation of new art practices, languages and forms raises questions around our understanding of what constitutes ontologically these once seemingly clearly-defined mediums. It is not merely that in a world of media-equivalence all technological supports hold the same artistic status. It is that the digital contains all mediums and, consequently, redefines them. As Philip Dubois notes:

[...] the digital, as a *dispositif*, has flattened, erased, annulled the differences of nature between the different kinds of image (painting, photography, film, video, etc.)—and even between texts, images, and sounds, all of which are now lodged under the same undifferentiated digital label of reproduction and the transmission of “signals” of information.¹²

What is clear from a study of contemporary painting and photographic practices is that any attempt at creating a universally “pure” aesthetic

⁹ From the inception of photography both it and painting have had a complex relationship, with each defining the other. To understand how the earliest photographers responded to the “art photography” debate see: Philip Prodger, *Victorian giants. The birth of art photography* (London: The National Portrait Gallery, 2018); and Mark Haworth-Booth, *Photography, an independent art: photographs from the Victoria and Albert Museum 1839-1996* (London: V & A Publications, 1997). To understand how painters of the nineteenth century responded to photography see: Aaron Scharf, *Art and Photography* (London: Allen Lane, 1968).

¹⁰ Almost all of the contributors—at the conference and in this book—have positioned either painting or photography in relation to the digital. However, bringing these activities and ideas together begins to highlight areas of “cross-over” and aspects of convergent practice and thinking.

¹¹ Explored in Tatiana Rosenstein's essay in this book.

¹² Philippe Dubois, “Trace-Image to Fiction-Image: The unfolding of Theories of Photography from the 80s to the Present”, *October* 158 (2016): 159, doi:10.1162/octo_a_00275.

through a strict adherence to a discipline's material homogeneity is now impossible. This is not solely because the understanding of a medium's plurality has long since overturned Clement Greenberg's (1909-1994) "medium specificity" where "medium" is reductively equated to a discipline's materiality.¹³ It is also because of the media-multiplicity, visual image saturation, and technological crossover the digital brings about. Saul Ostrow notices:

[...] the evidence of the digital's effect on our consciousness may be observed in the changing relationship between painting, photography, and film as each succumbs to, resists, or is annexed into the experiences and aesthetics engaged by digital media's sphere...the differentiation between visual art and photography now exists only as an index of differing perspectives and contexts.¹⁴

It is evident that artists who engage in truly critical practices are looking now, perhaps more than ever, at what defines the mediums formed through a complicated network of associations with other mediums and frameworks. According to Carol Armstrong:

[...] no medium is singular or autonomous: by definition mediums are go-betweens...mediums exist only in relation to one another, within a matrix, and as a means of communication rather than as purely abstract, (self-) reflexive entities.¹⁵

There is, now, a consciousness of the "seepage" of one medium into another through the flow of the digital and for concerned artists it is these areas of crossover that become the *locus* of praxis. The *borders* of painting and photography in relation to the digital become the *centre* of new creative production. Given the slippage, mutability and morphing that occurs across and between practices, it is the edges of activity that delineate the essence of mediums. Jacques Derrida's (1930-2004) philosophy of the impossibility of separating the (seemingly "pure") "inside" of the artwork from the outside becomes the focus of investigation for artists:

¹³ See: Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999).

¹⁴ Saul Ostrow, "Photography, Fine Art Photography, and the Visual Arts: 1900-2001", in *Focal Encyclopedia of Photography 4th Edition*, ed. Michael R. Peres (Waltham, MA: Focal Press, 2007).

¹⁵ Carol Armstrong, "Painting Photography Painting: Timelines and Medium Specificities", in *Painting beyond itself: the medium in the post-medium condition*, ed. Isabelle Graw and Ewa Lejer-Burcharth (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016), 124.

This permanent requirement—to distinguish between the internal or proper sense and the circumstance of the object being talked about—organizes all philosophical discourses on art, the meaning of art and meaning as such [...]¹⁶

And Mark Cheetham comments:

More often than not, a discipline's central concerns are defined not so much by self-conscious, programmatic statements of principle but by the activities of *bordering* fields.¹⁷

But further to this, painting and photography can now be understood as forming a *continuum* of medium(s) and practice(s) that are seamlessly connected through physical and non-physical structures, supports and methods of dissemination and reception. The mediums stand most discretely in their analogue manifestations at either end of this range of possible interconnections. Here, where they are anchored in their traditional supports—paint applied to canvas and light exposing sensitised paper for example—their inherent natures in the traditional sense of “painting” and “photograph” are most distinct.¹⁸ Where digital technologies stand in contradistinction to “traditional” painting and photography greater understandings of their particularity as mediums can be more fully realised. Rosalind Krauss states:

[...] it is precisely the onset of higher orders of technology—“robot, computer”—which allows us, by rendering older techniques outmoded, to grasp the inner complexity of the mediums those techniques supported.¹⁹

Where the move from traditional mediums to new definitions of these occurs, it is clear that the digital is more than a bridge that links two separate disciplines; painting and photography are now immersed within the

¹⁶ Jacques Derrida, *The truth in painting* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 47.

¹⁷ Mark A. Cheetham, *Kant, art and art history: moments of discipline* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 5.

¹⁸ There are innovative practices in contemporary analogue photography, principally in a move toward reinforcing the “objectness” of the photograph (as antidote to the digital's lack of physicality). Matthew Brandt's practice is a good example. Matt Saunders' work is another example with his fusing painting and photography materially and chemically. I would argue that explorations of the materiality of paint in, and of, itself is now exhausted as a practice.

¹⁹ Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea*, 53.

digital code, and can be fused together as one. This cohesion of mediums in contemporary art practices is not a type of hybridity, a simple stitching together or juxtaposition associated with postmodernist “multiplicity”, but a true synthesis in the creation of new forms.

What do we understand of the photograph when it can be manipulated, pulled, pushed and extended into “paint” through digital reconfiguration?²⁰ And what do we understand of painting when computers can be programmed to paint on canvas and respond, via a constant visual feedback loop, to the marks, shapes, patterns and colours of their own making?²¹ Where does difference lie if what were once understood as separate mediums can now exist within the same non-physical structures? The digital photograph is the binary code and, simultaneously, digital painting is this same code. The code is both painting and photograph at once together. As Lev Manovich asserts:

On the material level, the shift to digital representation and the common modification/editing tools which can be applied to most media (copy, paste, morph, interpolate, filter, composite, etc.) and which substitute traditional distinct artistic tools erased the differences between photography and painting (in the realm of still image) [...]²²

As the digital code is both photograph and painting, it could be argued that the only difference between the two is that the “original” photographic image is captured from the world “out there” whilst the painting is created within the screen. But photography’s indexical relation to the world which, as Susan Sontag put it, delivers the “trace, something directly stencilled off the real” is brought into question when light waves are “read” by the digital sensor and algorithmically re-presented as image.²³ In the rapidly expanding field of digitisation, the photograph loses its sense of self as it is opened out through the potential of manipulation in the digital code. The photographic “original” is eradicated when hand-held digital devices

²⁰ In 2018 *Photoshop* will be thirty years old, having had its first public exposure in 1988. Now smartphones enable digital manipulation of photographic images in the device itself.

²¹ The artist Harold Cohen (1928-2016) invented AARON, a computer program designed to work autonomously in producing paintings.

²² Lev Manovich, “Post-media Aesthetics”, accessed February 25, 2018, <http://manovich.net/index.php/projects/post-media-aesthetics>.

²³ Susan Sontag, *On photography* (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 153.

offer instant and infinite mutable variations of the captured image.²⁴ Here there is no single “objective” view of the world, but a fluidity across the variables of the image that banishes all sense of the original from contemporary photographic language.²⁵ And even the idea that the image must be captured from an external source is questioned through practices that generate photograms purely within the computer. As with analogue photograms, digital photograms are created without a lens, but the computer also makes the external object redundant. Thomas Ruff (b.1958) works with computer software in a virtual darkroom to create “three-dimensional” objects that can be “suspended” above digital “paper”. Coloured light is projected within the program across the objects leaving “shadows” remaining as the resultant image. Whilst having a strong connection to the photograms of Man Ray (1890-1976) and László Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946) these images are created without any tangible, real-world source.

Creative practices that take place within the computer or engage the digital not only lead toward but, in many ways, demand digitised forms of dissemination and reception. Social network platforms invite artists to upload their images for instant world-wide distribution, and painters and photographers engaged in contemporary two-dimensional visual practices eagerly embrace these for sharing their own, and appropriating others’, artwork.²⁶ Younger painters upload images of their latest paintings for instant access which either bypasses the traditional gallery and its audi-

²⁴ Multiples taken from an original are a fundamental element of analogue photography. Henry Fox Talbot’s negative/positive process ultimately superseded the Daguerreotype because of its inherent capability for (mass) reproduction.

²⁵ At the time of writing, the newly released *Light L16* camera captures multiple images of the scene simultaneously—with each having a varying depth of field, focus and so on—through its sixteen apertures. The camera combines ten images into one, where depth of field, for instance, can be manipulated discretely. Consequently there is no definable, single, image as an “original” source. See: “The Light L16 Camera”, *Light*, accessed February 25, 2018, <https://light.co/camera>.

²⁶ Artists are also working directly with and through the Internet as both the medium of their practice and as a means of critiquing what have become the norms of behavior through social media. For example Shaun Utter’s random Google maps (see: Shaun Utter, “Random Google Maps”, accessed February 25, 2018, <http://www.shaunutter.com/coding/random-google-maps/>), Man Bartlett’s use of a diverse range of new media (see: Man Bartlett, “Man Bartlett”, accessed February 25, 2018, <http://www.manbartlett.com>), Molly Soda (see: “DO I SEEM MORE PROFESSIONAL TO YOU?”, *mollysoda*, accessed February 25, 2018, <http://mollysoda.exposed>), and Amalia Ulman (see: “amaliaulman”, Instagram, accessed February 25, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/amaliaulman/>) are just a few of the proliferation of (predominantly younger) artists working in these areas.

ence, or supplements this with new audiences. Kenny Scharf and Austin Lee, with eighty one thousand and twenty seven thousand followers on *Instagram* respectively, are perfect examples of this way of operating. Their brash paintings have an immediacy that can be instantly “consumed” through the smartphone.²⁷ If, as Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) famously declared, photography kills the “aura” of art then the image-saturated web has the capacity for annihilating it or, at least, reconfiguring our understandings of what art can be.²⁸

Today millions of viewers can instantaneously engage with the latest creations of artists. However this engagement, which is ephemeral because it is caught within the web of image bombardment that the Internet delivers, demands instant gratification.²⁹ As more images are uploaded the visual experience is all the more quickly exhausted, and the pictures posted rapidly consumed. Discussing photography’s stimulation of image creation from all possible sources, Sontag declared:

²⁷ See: “kennyscharf”, Instagram, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/kennyscharf/>; and “austinlee”, Instagram, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/austinlee/>. See also, for example, Louise Bonnet (“louisebonnetstudio”, Instagram, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/louisebonnetstudio/>), Jeff Elrod (“#jefelrod”, Instagram, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/jefelrod/>), and Gorka Mohamed (“gorkamohamed”, Instagram, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/gorkamohamed/>)

²⁸ See: Walter Benjamin, *The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction* (Lexington, KY: Prism Key Press, 2010). Benjamin saw that photography, as the medium of the masses, would eradicate bourgeois methods of engaging with art (primarily, the elitist institutions of the gallery). State monopoly of this engagement would be eroded as photography, with its new methods of production, dissemination and reception—controlled by the masses—would proliferate. Whilst the Internet might be seen as further eroding these bourgeois structures, this seeming “democratisation”, is illusory. The Internet is, of course, manipulated by vested interests where algorithms tailor the flow of information.

²⁹ At time of writing *Facebook* alone has had 250 billion photographs uploaded to its site, with 350 million images uploaded daily, or 243,000 photographs every minute, 4000 photographs every second. *Instagram* has had 40 billion photographs and videos uploaded to its site, with just under 9 million photos and videos uploaded daily. The total number of images on the Internet, which is exponentially ever increasing is potentially incalculable. However to get a sense of the sheer volume of traffic through the main social media sites alone see: “1 Second”, Internet Live Stats, accessed February 28, 2018, <http://www.internetlivestats.com/one-second/>.

To consume means to burn up—and, therefore, to need to be replenished. As we make images and consume them, we need still more images: and still more. The possession of a camera can inspire something akin to lust. And like all credible forms of lust, it cannot be satisfied: first because the possibilities of photography are infinite: and second, because the project is finally self-devouring.³⁰

If this were true for photography it is infinitely more so for the Internet's world of the digitised image. Artists who utilise the web as a means of direct engagement with the audience are in a constant battle of holding awareness in the instant, attention-grabbing “clickbait” domain of the net. They must make their work bolder, brasher, faster and louder. Paintings appropriate digital visual languages as a means of revitalising the discourse of its medium. The best of this work creates a visual tension by embodying rich and seductively new aesthetics that can be both contemplated and instantly consumed.³¹ Because of its methods of consumption the Internet, rather than being a simple repository for this work, shapes the forms of artworks.

These, and other, issues were presented and discussed at the *Painting-DigitalPhotography* conference, and have been further explored and expanded upon in the essays in this book. It is intended that the rich variety of themes will “cross-pollinate”—one potentially intersecting with the concerns of another. It is anticipated these essays will add to the critical discourse and engage artists in considering new ways in which to develop their practices in the digital age.

The Essays

When discussing the possible interconnections between painting, the digital and photography it is appropriate we open with Stephanie Rushton's *The Archaea: Painting Digital Photography*. Here Rushton discusses her recent photographic practice that brings together ecological concerns, literature and painting as a means of shaping her photographic imagery. She deploys Max Ernst's (1891-1976) series of works *L'Histoire Naturelle*

³⁰ Sontag, *On photography*, 179.

³¹ There are numerous painters who have appropriated forms of digital imagery as a means of reinvigorating painting. For examples, see: Mike Brennan, “The digital canvas”, *Modern Edition*, accessed February 25, 2018, <http://www.modernedition.com/art-articles/new-painting/contemporary-painting-digital.html>.

Mark Wright's essay looks at this subject in this book.

(1926) and J.G. Ballard's (1930-2009) novels in order to create her own visual language. Her embracing of Ernst's pictures unashamedly asserts the relation of photography to painting in the reclamation of types of image construction that the digital has enabled. This digital "enabling" reinforces the interconnectedness of disciplines and mediums, with Rushton utilising "paint" programs in *Photoshop* software to both assemble and reconfigure her photographic works. In the computer, the line between photography, painting and digital blurs, but printing these images onto recognisable photographic substrates firmly re-anchors them within a photographic language. Both this type of construction of the photographic image (literally assembled through *Photoshop*) and a direct referencing of paintings, owes much to the work of Jeff Wall (b.1946). With both Rushton and Wall there is the sense that, rather than speeding up production of image creation, the digital *slows down* the process. This method of making further reinforces the connections to the mediated practice of painting.

Through a reordering of the binary code the digital photograph can be seen—incorrectly—to be more overtly constructed than its analogue counterpart. In her essay *Programming Light: The Processing and Performance of Digital Photographs*, Catherine M. Weir highlights the misconception that digital reconfiguration of the photographic image is less "true" (to its "original" source) than the photograph produced in the developing bath. She points to Ansel Adams (1902-1984) and his assertion that the creative dimension of photographic practice takes place in the darkroom. And she notes that wet processing enables infinite possible variations of the image before this becomes fixed on the photographic paper. However the digital photograph, when held within the screen, has the potential for endless reconfiguration which puts it in a state of perpetual "becoming". Weir applies the notion of creativity taking place after the capturing of the image by making her digital photographs constantly alter; "(re)becoming" through ongoing digital stimuli. This perpetual reshaping of the photograph expunges the antiquated notion of "post-production" as Weir demonstrates there is no "before" or "after" in the fabrication of the image, but a constant "now" in the flux of the digital. This is a key difference between the digital and materials-based photography (or painting); that with analogue processes there is an "end" point of fixity, stasis and permanence to the medium. In contrast, any "permanence" the digital has is in its potential for perpetual fluidity.

The digital manipulations that are the key element of Weir's work lead onto Klaus Speidel's *Could it be Painting? Definitions, Symptoms (and Digital Retouching)*. Speidel begins his essay by noting the difficulties in defining painting, particularly if we attempt to locate the medium's es-

sence. He contends that “painting” is potentially an “open concept” that does not have a single essence, but can be understood as existing and operating within particular sets of conditions. In order to frame his argument, Speidel replaces an approach to painting through definition by outlining what he sees as the “symptoms” of the medium. For him these “symptoms” include operations such as smudging, rubbing, covering, layering and so on as well as incorporating a sense of flatness, and degrees of transparency and opacity. Speidel argues that digital retouching *is* painting as it incorporates such operations and qualities as fundamental aspects of its nature. From this Speidel positions David Bornscheuer’s (b.1983) and Joshua Citarella’s (b.1987) digital retouching of fashion shoots as painting. He understands that in fashion photography digital retouching only truly performs its function when hidden. It discreetly adjusts the photograph (usually of a person), and becomes embedded within it, such as to make a believable reality out of another, manipulated, one. Exposing this retouching, and removing it from the *milieu* of the fashion-shoot by placing it within art-world contexts, reconceptualises this activity (and by association the medium) as art. Bornscheuer’s and Citarella’s work highlights that the transposition between photograph and painting not only achieves a fluidity across mediums but also a cross-over between fashion and fine art.

Painting the Digital River: Before and After by James Faure Walker complements Speidel’s essay with a positioning of painting sited within, and stemming from, “the digital”. Since the 1980s, Walker’s creation of art through computer programming has placed him at the forefront of artistic pioneers using digital technology in painting practice. In his essay, Walker reflects on his career and makes particular reference to his book *Painting the Digital River*.³² He reviews that text’s deliberations on the advances of painting practice connected to computer development and uses it as a marker to understand what further artistic/digital progress has taken place since its publication. Walker touches on a paradigm shift; from the “computer revolution” that a few saw—impetuously—as heralding the demise of materials-based painting practices, to contemporary painting’s embrace of digitisation as a means of constantly reinventing itself. He understands that the digital’s erasure of traditional forms of painting could never happen due to painters’ physiological need to be humanly connected—in a physical manner—to the material substance they work with; a human trait that will not be replaced by non-physical digitisation. In 2005,

³² James Faure Walker, *Painting the Digital River: How an Artist Learned to Love the Computer* (New Jersey, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2006).

when Walker wrote his book, *Facebook* was in its infancy and *Instagram* lay five years in the future.³³ In effect, his publication sat on the “fault line” between two distinct eras: pre-*Digital River*, where artists would consciously sit at the computer if they wished to create art that engaged digital technology, and post-*Digital River* where digital devices and apps make new art languages not only instantly possible but inevitable.

If Speidel’s and Walker’s texts look to the stretching of painting through the digital, then Duncan Wooldridge’s essay *The Process the Photograph is Threaded Through: The Reproduction Image in Marina Gadonneix and Louise Lawler* complements this from a photographic perspective. Wooldridge focuses on the potentialities for photographic production and display that the digital enables, and he begins by examining the work of Marina Gadonneix (b.1977) who, in turn, reveals the production processes inherent in the “documentation photograph”. As with digital retouching the making of such photographs is usually hidden, but Gadonneix makes explicit this process by focussing on the documentation of artworks that are “off-camera”. This raises viewer consciousness of the creation of the image, which has natural associations with the mediated nature of painting. Wooldridge then examines Louise Lawler’s (b.1947) photographic practice of “adjusting to fit” her images to the given context in order to further underscore the sense of the (always) mediating nature of digital photography. Echoing aspects of Catherine M. Weir’s essay, Wooldridge highlights how Lawler’s practice demonstrates the forever “becoming” of the digital image. He shows that through stretching, re-scaling and morphing the image (a perpetual potential of the digital) attention is brought to the immediacy of content within the image and the “now” of its re-creation. In being resized and printed to fit the gallery wall, book page, poster, etc. the photograph moves through a displacement: it gives up its content in its immediacy and is simultaneously made emphatic through its spectacular nature. It is this spectacle that further reinforces the connections with the inherent nature of painting.

The reconfiguration of the digital image and the sense of spectacle found in Lawler’s work leads neatly onto Henrietta Simson’s essay *Disrupting Space: Haptics and Digitalised Optics*. Simson describes her artistic practice that draws on late medieval and early Renaissance pictorial space as a means of critiquing the digital screen-based environment. She sees capitalism’s narrativised and spectacular image saturation (billboard, LED screens, television, Internet) as a purposeful distraction from the real-

³³ *Facebook* was launched in February, 2004. *Instagram* was launched in October, 2010.

ities of everyday life. And she reminds us that digitised images on screens are not “neutral” but are constructed out of the dominant perspectival system of depiction. This construction of capitalist visual representation is a continuation of a painterly legacy that reinforces bourgeois ideology. It is the idealised sense of “self” being at the centre of all things. Digital imagery thus reinforces a narrative that has been perpetuated since the fifteenth century in western European society, one that ensnares the spectator within an acceptance of the bourgeois *status quo*. Simson challenges this in her artwork by conjoining painted pre-perspectival landscapes—devoid of narrative, representation, structure—with digital imagery. By bringing the materiality of thirteenth and fourteenth century pre-perspectival visual language to the digital, Simson aims to provoke a more embodied and physical viewing experience. The disruption of the spectator’s spatial perception when engaged with digital artworks breaks from customary ideological constraints. It destabilises the notion that the given image is a “natural” one, carrying with it an unassailable truth of an “objective” reality, and challenges viewers to rethink their position in relation to the world.

For nearly fifty years John Hilliard has produced aesthetically and conceptually challenging works that interrogate the technical and formal aspects of photography. His images continually draw attention to the construction of the photograph, highlighting both the unique ontology of the medium and the nature of photographic practice. It is perhaps because Hilliard is first and foremost a fine artist that he has been able to stand “outside” the more common activity of “taking photographs” and view its practices and nature with such an objective eye. It is therefore both surprising and of no surprise at all that in his essay *The Painted Photograph* Hilliard reveals the ongoing relationship between his photographic practice and painting. Surprising because Hilliard’s *oeuvre* underscores so unequivocally photography’s distinctive nature as a medium. Not surprising because the painter in him draws on the visual language, formal aesthetics, and narrativisation inherent in painting as a means of informing and shaping his practice. However, this is not simply borrowing from the language of painting as a means of creating photographic motifs. Hilliard understands that by exploring photography’s relationship to painting he reveals the uniqueness of the photographic medium by forcefully demonstrating it is *not* painting. It is his citation of painting through his photographic practice that reveals the distinctive nature of photography, enabling the viewer to see more clearly what photography is.³⁴ In his essay, Hilliard articulates

³⁴ See: Rosemary Hawker, “The Idiom in Photography As the Truth in Painting”, *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 101, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 541-554.

this interconnectivity across the decades of his practice by assembling his output into various themes and headings.

This centring on photography's relation to painting is counterbalanced by Astrid Honold's essay *Strokes and Stripes: Thoughts on the Application of Photography in the Work of Gerhard Richter*. Honold argues that Gerhard Richter's (b.1932) oeuvre is positioned within the framework of dialectical materialism, with his experiences of the Second World War shaping his philosophical outlook of the metaphysical contradictions of the human condition. She asserts that Richter's practice negotiates *between* painting and photography as a means of addressing fundamental philosophical questions: of how art can synthesise the contradictions of truth, reality, trauma and hope. This *Richterian Synthesis*, as Honold terms it, embodies the two-fold nature of art in that it aims for the possibility of the work to transcend its own nature (becoming a thing-in-itself) whilst being wedded to, and ultimately only capable of being understood through, that nature. Honold sees that, for Richter, the possibility of mediation comes *before* any depiction he brings about through manipulation of the elementary "substance" he deploys in his work. This "substance" is primarily the materiality of paint but also now the digital pixel. Thus, Richter's recent creations of digital artwork based on binary principles can be understood as part of a continuing search for synthesis and transcendence. Through digital reconfiguration of images stemming from his own abstract paintings Richter flips, inverts and mirrors in order to arrive at what become his *Patterns* works, and the later *Strip Paintings*. This digitally printed work is not differentiated from Richter's paintings but further underscores his attempt to bring about a mediation between opposites; between abstraction *and* figuration and painting *and* photography, enabling him to make an analogy for the non-visual and incomprehensible.

My own research focuses on conjoining painting and digitised photography in the same pictures. I was drawn to the work of Marc Lüders, as he paints directly onto photographs, and realised his practice would strongly contribute to the theme of this book. I was interested in applying Richard Wollheim's (1923-2003) "Twofold" theory of "seeing-in" to Lüders' work as a means of developing further understandings of the perceptual that comes from viewing such 2D artworks. *Twofoldness/Threefoldness: Marc Lüders' Photopicturen* aims to unpack a specific viewing experience of Lüders' pictures as a means of throwing light onto the viewing of paintings and photographs more generally. This analysis focuses on the formal and psychological (perceptual) differences between painting and photography. I realise this is only one way of interpreting this work (and similar practices) and that other approaches to studying these "Photopicturen"