

## CLEARINGS

*The artist ... from the labyrinth beyond time and space, seeks his way out to a clearing.* Marcel Duchamp.

*A clearing is a place where light falls openly and sight is renewed.*

A dappled space in the forest in which the light filtering through the trees creates a play of light and dark with the shadows... All darkness and silvery shimmer like the positive and negative states of a photograph... Heidegger's *Lichtung*... The clearing is a space of quiet disclosure, (of 'not hiding') where light is fugitive and substance complex and mysterious. Approaching visibility - in the realm of things that emerge and linger on - the clearing, like the photographic image, is a space of paradoxical presence.

Luminous in their essence, photographs resonate between obdurate matter and spectral image. A drawing made with light - the camera-based photographic image is a material trace that contains a link with the 'real'. As a record of presence past, a testament to our witness; the photograph discloses. As the conjunction of resemblance and trace, the photographic image posits an encounter with the 'mechanisms' of truth, vision and experience.

Document and discourse - images depend for their meanings on networks of language and powerful ideologies underpin their reading. Linked with the regimes of archive and empire in the late nineteenth century, the emergence of the photograph produced new arrangements and perceptions in the world - the demystifying apparatus of the camera creating images that complicated one another at the juncture of mechanism and vitalism.

The academic language of art was also integral to photography from its inception and linked the alchemical magic of the photograph with the ideals of a Romantic aesthetic. The image, like a kind of 'fossil poetry', carried intimations of loss and mortality, of sensate experience and phenomena, of intimacy, beauty and of what lies beyond.

Pulled from the continuum of time and formed from the flux and interdependence of being in the world - the photographic image is now ceaselessly transposed and reproduced. An ahistorical society of migratory images mediates and formulates our experience, imaginings and memories of the world. Our experience of contemporary images hinges on our familiarity with this ubiquitous image-archive. Without it, memory would have to find other rules for recording things.

There remains the rhetoric of the document in these images - a trace of the lost nonhuman worlds of natural history, the creations of modern science and objective rationality. In the conflation of scale, of time, of object and image, and of analogue and digital registers, their stilled 'impure' forms prompt the viewer to look at the disputed borders of our relation with images. An encounter with these contemporary photographs resonates with both sides of the paradox. Each distinct approach is informed by an individual sensibility and a sense of the photograph as an ambiguous territory where the viewer's reading is paramount. The image is maintained in representation but pushed to the margins of the real world.

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