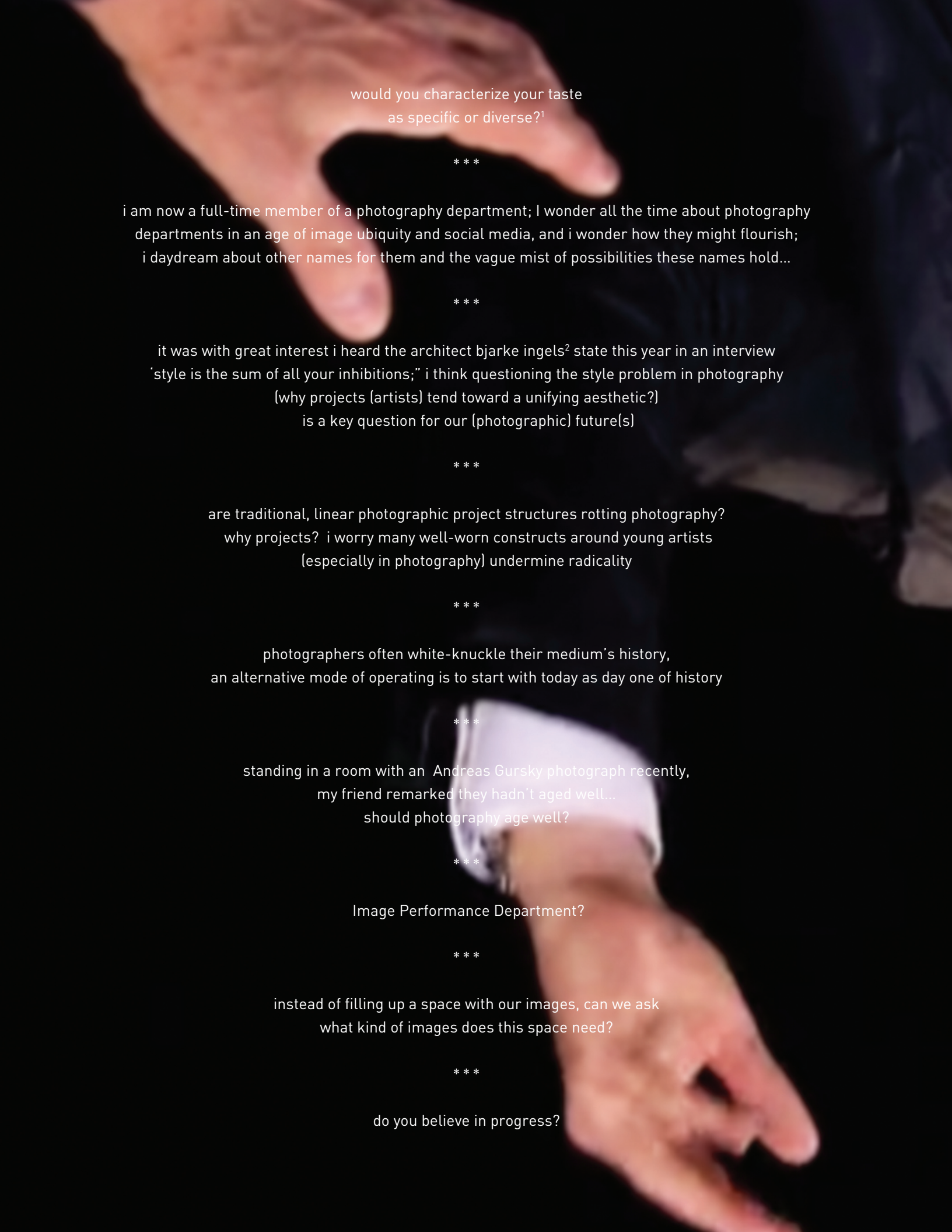


33 Meditations on Photography

by Jason Lazarus



would you characterize your taste
as specific or diverse?¹

* * *

i am now a full-time member of a photography department; I wonder all the time about photography
departments in an age of image ubiquity and social media, and i wonder how they might flourish;
i daydream about other names for them and the vague mist of possibilities these names hold...

* * *

it was with great interest i heard the architect bjarke ingels² state this year in an interview
'style is the sum of all your inhibitions;' i think questioning the style problem in photography
(why projects [artists] tend toward a unifying aesthetic?)
is a key question for our [photographic] future(s)

* * *

are traditional, linear photographic project structures rotting photography?
why projects? i worry many well-worn constructs around young artists
(especially in photography) undermine radicality

* * *

photographers often white-knuckle their medium's history,
an alternative mode of operating is to start with today as day one of history

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standing in a room with an Andreas Gursky photograph recently,
my friend remarked they hadn't aged well...
should photography age well?

* * *

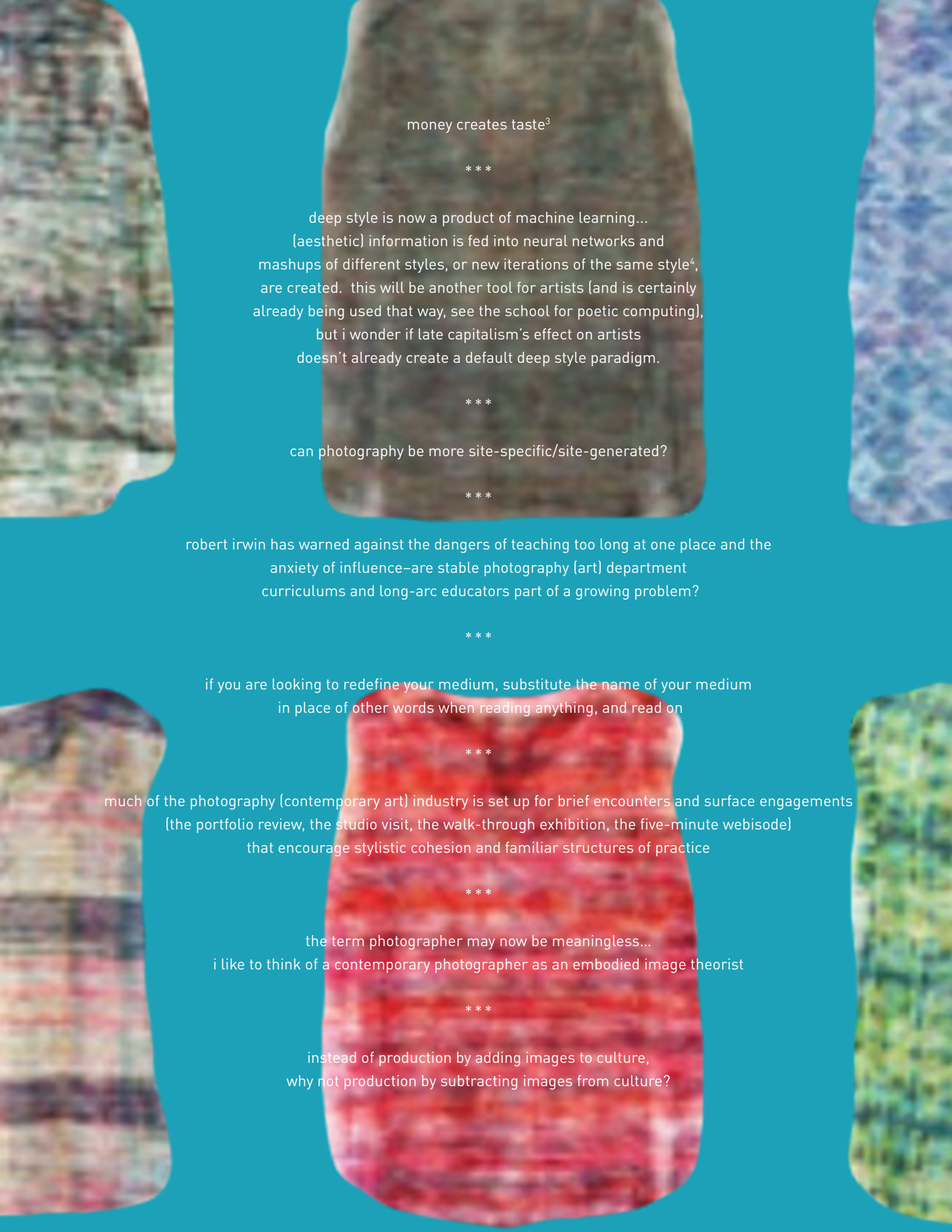
Image Performance Department?

* * *

instead of filling up a space with our images, can we ask
what kind of images does this space need?

* * *

do you believe in progress?



money creates taste³

* * *

deep style is now a product of machine learning...
(aesthetic) information is fed into neural networks and
mashups of different styles, or new iterations of the same style⁴,
are created. this will be another tool for artists (and is certainly
already being used that way, see the school for poetic computing),
but i wonder if late capitalism's effect on artists
doesn't already create a default deep style paradigm.

* * *

can photography be more site-specific/site-generated?

* * *

robert irwin has warned against the dangers of teaching too long at one place and the
anxiety of influence—are stable photography (art) department
curriculums and long-arc educators part of a growing problem?

* * *

if you are looking to redefine your medium, substitute the name of your medium
in place of other words when reading anything, and read on

* * *

much of the photography (contemporary art) industry is set up for brief encounters and surface engagements
(the portfolio review, the studio visit, the walk-through exhibition, the five-minute webisode)
that encourage stylistic cohesion and familiar structures of practice

* * *

the term photographer may now be meaningless...
i like to think of a contemporary photographer as an embodied image theorist

* * *

instead of production by adding images to culture,
why not production by subtracting images from culture?

God

how might we reconceive shutter, lens, (camera) body,
exposure, scan, focus, print (object), print (action)?

google image searching 'allegory of the cave' is a textbook in itself

photography travels too well, exacerbating the style problem—new projects are introduced, take a promotional journey,
and recede—can photography be made more fluid? can the edges of an image/project/mindset be less visible?

Political Relationships

Philosophical Friendship

can photographers think of their practice as an accumulation of gestures? engage an arc of long-term experimentation?
eschew cohesion (deferring recognition)? have more faith that their gestural arc is where their longterm contributions will flourish?

can photography be more bodily?

becoming a painter (photographer) is my way of deciphering the codes of visual information
and experience that structure capitalism in our time⁵

with the current explosion of image technologies,
it is a fertile time for artists to create new, fluid, visual languages
for subjects (including themselves) in need of agency,
rather than trying to recoup them into modernist myths

Department of Image Philosophy?

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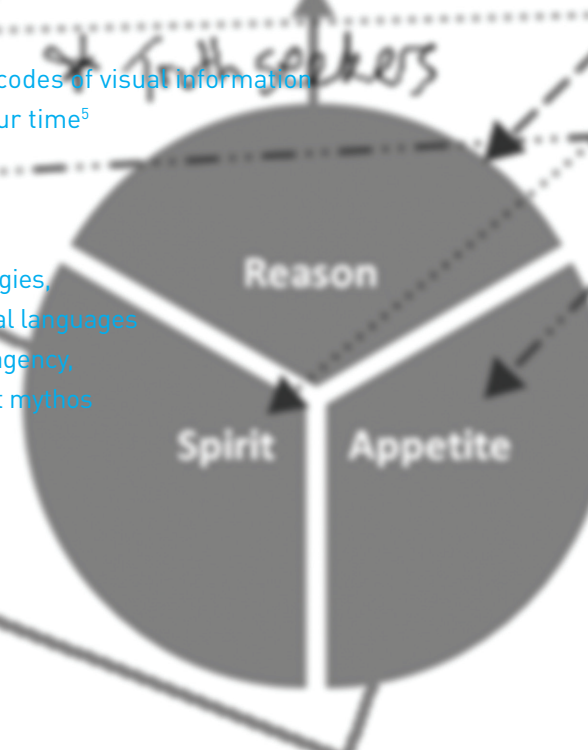
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my best students have taught me the indescribable shift that has occurred growing up with the internet post 9/11; this shift has and continues to challenge much of contemporary photographic practice, which struggles to keep pace

wolfgang tillmans, early in his career, embodied highly prescient values: modularity, site-specificity, objecthood, simultaneous micro/macro narratives and, even further, the embodied flattening of image hierarchies (all pre-internet!); as a productive exercise, who is prescient in 2016?

* * *

contemporary photography is often at its best when the subject(s) lingers between the images (rather than in the frame) the images themselves become obstinate foils that deflect a growing conversation to an entire room or indefinite body

* * *

for me there are two kinds of artists: those whose work develops temporally, and those whose work expands in space, creating endless variations on a central thesis.⁶

* * *

one of my favorite 'photographers' right now is Kimberlé Crenshaw⁷, a theorist who developed the term intersectionality. in short, the term formally recognizes gender and race as a legal moiré that marginalizes beyond recuperation. while she doesn't work with a camera in any sense, her contribution of the term is an integral moment of contemporary high vision where 'seeing' is significantly expanded. using this other model, who else could be proposed into the canon of photography?

* * *

can photography be more liquid? much of the metalanguage around photography's shift has already started this conversation. consider the recent MoMA exhibition title: Ocean of Images: New Photography 2015.
Department of Image Liquidity?

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i am implicated in all of these dilemmas (possibilities)

* * *

how can you create an experience?

¹A Series of Questions for Experimental Film and Video Programmers (othercinema.com)

²Ingels is the Danish architect who designed Two World Trade Center -- the fourth and final tower to be constructed at the former twin towers site.

³Jenny Holzer

⁴"...Here at Stitch Fix, we are always looking for new ways to improve our client experience. On the algorithms side that means helping our stylists to make better fixes through a robust recommendation system. With that in mind, one path to better recommendations involves creating an automated process to understand and quantify the style our inventory and clients at a fundamental level. Few would doubt that fashion is primarily a visual art form, so in order to achieve this goal we must first develop a way to interpret the style within images of clothing. In this post we'll look specifically at how to build an automated process using photographs of clothing to quantify the style of some of items in our collection. Then we will use this style model to make new computer generated clothing like the image to the right." (<http://multithreaded.stitchfix.com/blog/2015/09/17/deep-style/>)

⁵*The 95 Theses on Painting* by Molly Zuckerman Hartung (altered); Zuckerman-Hartung's compelling piece can be found at <http://www.mollyzuckerman-hartung.com/index.php?q=Page&ID=3>)

⁶Rochelle Feinstein by Justin Liebrman (<http://bombmagazine.org/article/4713/rochelle-feinstein>)

⁷(What follows is an excerpt from Crenshaw's Wikipedia page) "Crenshaw's focus on intersectionality is on how the law responds to issues that include gender and race discrimination. The particular challenge in law is that antidiscrimination laws look at gender and race separately and consequently African American women and other women of color experience overlapping forms of discrimination and the law unaware of how to combine the two leave these women with no justice.[2] Antidiscrimination laws and the justice systems attempt for a remedy to discrimination is limited and operates on a singular axis when one flows into another a complete and understandable definition has not been written in law therefore when the issue of intersectionality is presented in the court of law if one form of discrimination cannot be proved without the other than there is no law broken. The law defines discrimination of singular cases where you can only be discriminated based one thing or the other so when enforcing the law they go solely by the definition and if discrimination cannot be proved based on the single definition of one discrimination or the other then there is no crime committed. Crenshaw often refers to the case *DeGraffenreid v. General Motors* in writing, interviews, and lectures. In *DeGraffenreid v. General Motors*, a group of African American women argued they were receiving compound discrimination excluding them from employment opportunity. They contended that although women were eligible for office and secretarial jobs, in practice such positions only were offered to white women, barring African American women from seeking employment in the company. The courts weighed the allegations of race and gender discrimination separately, finding that the employment of African American male factory workers disproved racial discrimination, and the employment of white female office workers disproved gender discrimination. The court declined to consider compound discrimination, and dismissed the case.[2]"