

Constructing and Representing Reality

In the 1860's when photography became widespread it allowed people to see things, events and scenes that they had never previously had the opportunity to see before. This made a great impact on the public as explained in my post modernism notes. A rough timeline of events involved with photography from its point of invention follow:

1827

Nicephore Niepce is the first person to fix a photograph. Before this artists such as Canaletto used a camera obscura to paint scenes, much like a projector. One still exists in Edinburgh castle today and



although an image of the scene was given onto canvas through a lens, the artists had to sketch in the outlines and paint it afterwards – the image would never remain fixed. One of Canaletto's pieces featured on the right called 'Entrance to the Canal'.



1838



Louis Daguerre invented the 'Daguerrotype' with the Collodian wet plate process with images on glass plates. On left 'Still life'.

1841



Henry Fox Talbot invented the 'calotype', silver halide soaked paper, which would hold an image and give way to today's photographic print.. On left, 'Tower'.

Delaroche once quoted:

‘...from today painting is dead.’

This is because he believed that *painting* would surpass the skills of the artist and *paintings* would become *inaccurate in comparison* to the results *photography gives*. But *this is not true*, *photography* acted *far more* as an aid to *painting*, *enhancing painters work* by *giving realistic resources of nudes and landscapes*. By the 1860's artists such as Delacroix, Manet, Corot, Courbet and Degas were all using *photography* as a resource to their work and *in most* you can see how this has *influenced their style*. This continued to the 90's where artists such as David Hockney also used *photographs* to source their work

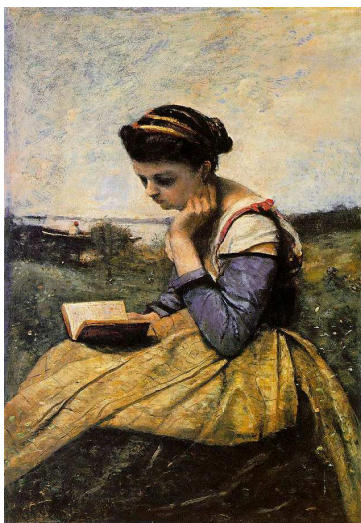
Corbet took *photo of an artists workshop* and worked *from it* to *paint a scene*. You can tell it has been *painted from a photograph* due to the stark *flesh tones and dark shadows* – these have a *photographic quality*.



Delacroix
'Orphan Girl at Cemetery'.



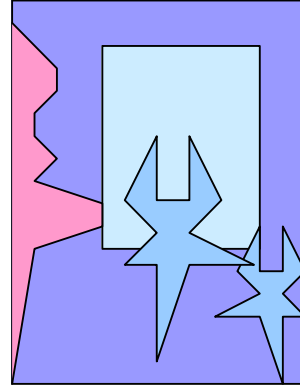
Manet,
'The Balcony'



Corot
'Woman Reading'



Degas
'Young woman'



You can also see that in some of Degas' work that some of the figures are half cut off the photo (pink in the ballerina diagram above), the same effect a photograph often gives. This gives a very relaxed and realistic feel of composition.

Early photographers also include:

Julia Margaret Cameron



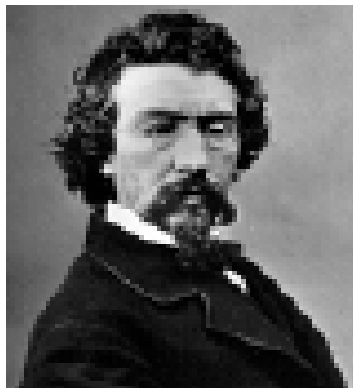
Henry Peach Robinson



Roger Fenton



Matthew Brady



All of these played on real life, especially 'fading away' by Robinson, showing a young girl dying from TB in the Victorian era. But does photography show the truth? The answer to this is no, photographs have an indexical quality; they show the effects elements such as light and shadow that indicates to us what the image is of. Photography does reflect the truth with a direct link between the image and what the photo is actually of.

Giacomo Balla in 1912 photographed an image of a pair of hands playing the violin, showing how movement can be recorded in photography. To the right is a piece he took of a dog walking.



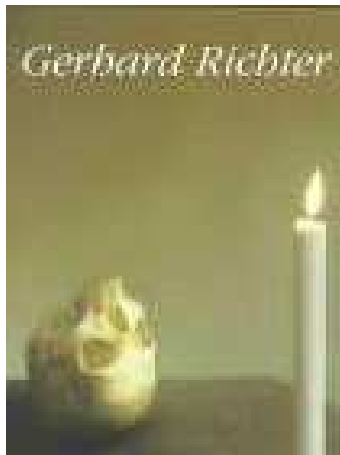


Lewis Hine also took sharp clean cut images of the USA as it was developing from the 1909 onwards. He discovered how to produce multiples of photographs from negatives and used his pictures to educate the public about the problems of child labour.



Andy Warhol in 1962 created the Marilyn Monroe prints '20 Marilyn's'. This was a crude newspaper photograph done with silkscreen printing onto canvas.

Ansel Adams photographed areas of beauty in the natural environment and moved the government to create national park districts.



Gerhard Richter also recognised photographic qualities in his oil paintings

Dorothea Lange was commissioned by the government to document the areas of poverty in America and this 'Migrant Mother' has become one of the most famous images of poverty and deprivation of all time.



Russel Lee's photographs of a woman's worn, arthritic hands put forward the idea of the hands tell more of a story than the face of the woman, showing her hardworking and labouring life.



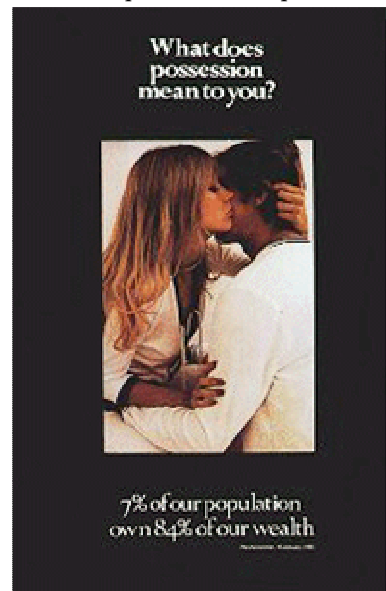
Brassai took an image of 'Bijou', an aging prostitute in France. He also liked to photograph drunks and street cleaners, all activities that took place at night.

Eugene Smith took images of a country doctor. One piece in particular shows him examining the eye of a boy who had been kicked by a horse, with an expression on his face as if to contemplate how to tell his parents he is probably blinded.

Diana Arbus shows a quite weak looking and nerdy character demonstrating for war, giving a stark contrast behind the unglamorous violence and death of war against the everyday American citizen. This is re-enforced with the snap shot nature of the photograph.

Jo Spencer's 'Greedy' shows an obese nude woman clutching chocolate bars over her chest where one breast has been amputated. It puts forward her story of breast cancer and having one breast removed she now feels ugly and fat. The solution she chooses to this feeling is to gorge on chocolate that of course results in her gaining more weight and being caught in a vicious circle of self obsession. The camera is recording a very powerful image.

Burgins 'What does possession mean to you' has social and political commentaries where the photograph makes reference to sexual possession, the text looks to possession of money and wealth.



Cindy Sherman looks at the typical stereotypes of women in society with very strong feminist views in her work.

Willie Doherty's photo 'Isolated' is taken in Northern Ireland and includes a black and white image of a caged flyover with a white line of

text reading 'isolated' in the centre. It challenges you to say why are you isolated? Is it because there is wire mesh over the flyover? Why is the mesh there? To stop people throwing things at the cars underneath?

Andreas Gursky takes very large format pictures, so large that you feel as if you are actually there, inside the photo. You start hunting for things out of place and irregular and noticing small details.



Richard Billingham takes photos of his dysfunctional family and activities/situations he finds himself in with them in everyday life.



Jessica Craig Martin looks at much the same subject of everyday life, her piece on the left showing girls in the ladies toilets.

Hannah Starkey has done similar photographs of women in the ladies toilets but with a strong feeling of tension or strong emotion. Another one of her works shows a group of people all sitting on a bench talking and chatting together while a singular girl stands alone to the far right of the composition – giving a strong feeling to isolation.

Tracey Ewins also plays on this feeling of isolation and vulnerability. One of her works shows her squatting nude in the corner of a beach hut. This relates to the way she has been treated by men in her past relationships and how she chooses to portray her emotion about them and how she felt as a result of their actions.

David Levinthal photographs toy soldiers and dolls in ways which make you feel as if you are looking at a real life situation. He did a wide collection of wild west themed figures as well as army themes and Barbie dolls portraits.

