

THE DISCERNING EYE:
CREATING VALUE IN THE 1970s AMERICAN MARKET FOR PHOTOGRAPHS

by

Molly Kalkstein

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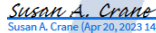
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Figure 81. Photographs eight through sixteen. Les Krims, *The Deerslayers* portfolio (Buffalo, NY: Les Krims, 1972). Offset lithographs. Box: 5.9 x 5.3 x 0.6 in. Sheet (each): 5.7 x 5.0 in.

Image (each): 4.9 x 3.3 in. Edition number 1441/4000. The Image Centre, Toronto, no accession number. © Les Krims.

Figure 82. Photographs seventeen through twenty-three. Les Krims, *The Deerslayers* portfolio (Buffalo, NY: Les Krims, 1972). Offset lithographs. Box: 5.9 x 5.3 x 0.6 in. Sheet (each): 5.7 x 5.0 in. Image (each): 4.9 x 3.3 in. Edition number 1441/4000. The Image Centre, Toronto, no accession number. © Les Krims.

Figure 83. Witkin Gallery, *Catalogue I: Rare and Contemporary Prints and Books* (New York: The Witkin Gallery, Inc., 1973), 17.

Figure 84. Letter from Daniel Wolf on behalf of AIPAD, April 20, 1979, series III, box 102, folder 10, Harry Lunn Papers, 004.M.17, Research Institute, Los Angeles, California.

Figure 85. Man Ray, *Le Violon d'Ingres*, 1924. Gelatin silver print, flush-mounted on board. Image/sheet/mount: 19 x 14 3/4 in. *The Surrealist World of Rosalind Gerstein Jacobs and Melvin Jacobs* (New York, Christie's, May 13, 2022), lot 615. © 2023 Man Ray Trust / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

Figure 86. Edward Steichen, *The Flatiron*, 1904, printed 1905. Gum-bichromate over platinum print. Sheet: 19 x 14 3/4 in. *Visionary: The Paul G. Allen Collection*, (New York: Christie's, November 8, 2022), lot 4. © 2023 The Estate of Edward Steichen / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Abstract

The 1970s “photo boom” was a critical period in the history of photography, one that irrevocably cemented the medium’s status in the art and museum worlds, its legitimacy as a subject of academic study, and its desirability as an object of both institutional and private collections. And yet, thorough investigations of this pivotal decade have rarely been attempted, and are most often couched within larger surveys of photography’s history and its acceptance as an art form. Even more conspicuously absent are dedicated studies of the photography market, which emerged in the late 1960s, developed over the course of the 1970s, and which has continued to influence the circulation, study, and exhibition of photographs in the decades since. This dissertation addresses this absence by systematically examining four key aspects of the 1970s photography market: the market’s previously overlooked relationship to the print revival of the 1950s and 1960s, and its attendant debates about “original” prints; the evolution and significance of the “vintage print” as a core marketing concept; the professionalization of photograph conservation, along with early examples of photographic forgery; and the popularization and standardization of limited edition prints and portfolios, especially as vehicles for selling, collecting, and investing in photography.

This dissertation focuses on developments in the United States and England from 1969 to 1980, bookended by the opening of New York’s Witkin Gallery and the founding of the Association of International Photography Art Dealers (AIPAD). It also, however, considers historical antecedents and developments across the first half of the twentieth century, as well as the photo boom’s reverberations through the present day. This project takes as its most important source material a variety of often neglected texts from the period of the photo boom, including auction and dealer catalogues, collecting guides, and articles in both the popular and specialist press. It also makes ample use of archival resources, recent secondary literature, and dozens of

new interviews with important participants in the 1970s photo boom. Such resources, considered as a whole, offer vivid first-hand access to this crucial moment in photography's recent history.

INTRODUCTION

“Original?” she says. “What is this thing, original photograph? You point camera, click, you make copy. That is how camera works. Camera is like a photocopier. So what is original? Original is copy already. Is not like painting.”

“That is nonsense, Marijana. Sophistry. A photograph is not the thing itself. Nor is a painting. But that does not make either of them a copy. Each becomes a new thing, a new real, new in the world, a new original. I have lost an original print which is of value to me and I want it back.”

— J. M. Coetzee, *Slow Man*

Photographer Paul Rayment, the narrator and protagonist of South African-Australian writer J. M. Coetzee’s 2005 novel *Slow Man*, has been seriously injured in a bicycle accident, and spends his days making an arduous recovery in his Adelaide bachelor’s apartment. One of his few consolations is his extensive personal collection of nineteenth-century photographs by the French photographer Antoine Fauchery, which he began assembling in the 1970s, “when first-generation photographs were still affordable,” and which he plans to donate to the State Library.¹ When he finds that one of his precious photographs is missing, he is distraught. Or rather, “It is not that any of the prints are actually missing. Nothing is actually missing. But one of the Faucherys has the wrong feel to it, and, as soon as he brings it out of its plastic sleeve into the light, the wrong look too.”² Drago, the son of Rayment’s Croatian caregiver Marijana, has scanned the photograph and created a clever digital forgery, substituting his own grandfather’s face for one of the figures in the original. Rayment’s attempt to retrieve the pilfered photograph and to explain its value, however, is met with stubborn objection, as Marijana insists that all photographs are copies. She refuses to countenance the idea that one print should be more important to Rayment than any other,

¹ J. M. Coetzee, *Slow Man* (London: Secker & Warburg, 2005), 48.

² Coetzee, *Slow Man*, 218.

or that it is logical to ascribe such significance to the missing object. “You make photograph, or this man, how you say, Fauchery, make photograph, then you make prints, one two three four five, all these prints all original, five times original, ten times original, hundred times original, no copies?”³ For Marijana, a photograph is simply a copy of an image, and the notion that a copy can be “original” is deeply nonsensical. Rayment, meanwhile, aside from the more blatant falsification of the image, is immediately sensible of the “wrongness” of the physical object, and its subtle but, to him, obvious difference in look and feel from the original he knows so well.

The debate about whether photography is a medium of valuable originals or one of interchangeable duplicates has recurred throughout its history, but never did it have such tangible repercussions as during and in the immediate aftermath of the so-called “photo boom” of the 1970s. From the vantage point of the twenty-first century, when photographs of all kinds garner thousands and even millions of dollars at auction, and routinely appear in galleries and on museum walls, it can be startling to remember that both this commercial value and cultural currency are relatively recent phenomena. The medium itself has now existed for over a hundred and eighty years, but it was not until the late 1960s and 1970s that photography began to definitively move into the museum, the university, and the marketplace, most prominently in the United States. This era was marked by a groundswell of enthusiastic interest in the practice of photography, as well as the myriad uses of photographic imagery and processes in pop culture, news media, and fine art. At the core of this boom was the emergence of a robust market heralding an unprecedented rise in prices and status for photographic prints. New galleries devoted to photography sprang up across the country in the 1970s, venerable auction houses held record-breaking sales, and newspapers ran breathless headlines about the “zooming market” for “camera masterpieces.”⁴ It is entirely apt that

³ Coetzee, *Slow Man*, 245.

⁴ Gene Thornton, “The Zooming Market for Photographic Prints,” *Town & Country*, March 1975, 46–49,

Coetzee's character Rayment began collecting during this period—and that he was ultimately priced out of the market, perhaps within just a few years. The photo boom was also neatly demarcated by the global economic recession at the end of the decade, which dampened the seemingly unchecked but ultimately unsustainable growth of the market's first wave. The long tail of the boom, however, has continued to resonate and underpin subsequent developments across the field of photography.

It is the premise of this dissertation that the raucous birth of the photography market was attended by a major epistemological shift in thinking about certain kinds of photographs. Photographs began to be widely considered not only as interchangeable carriers of visual information, but as collectible objects with historical and aesthetic weight, and covetable physical qualities. I propose that photographs' ascendance as aesthetic commodities in the 1970s was specifically based on an insistent emphasis on their physical qualities and their value as art objects. Most importantly, buyers, sellers, makers, and scholars alike broadly subscribed to a notion of the photographic "original," supplanting a prevailing conception of photography as a medium of unlimited copies. I also argue that this expanded understanding of photographs drew heavily from similar discourses around original graphics, which reached a zenith in the decades immediately preceding the photo boom. There was and is a palpable tension between understanding photographs as originals and understanding photography as inherently reproducible. This tension was central to the trajectory of the photo boom, as dealers, collectors, and photographers repeatedly made the case for photographs as singular objects worthy of study, display, collection, and investment. It has also continued to form an important through-line in photography criticism and scholarship, although the decades since the boom have been marked by intense backlash against

96; Jane A. Mull, "Investors in the Camera Masterpieces," *Fortune*, June 1976, n.p.

some of the central tenets of that period. Scholar Christopher Phillips, for example, identified exactly the same shift, “from multiplicity, ubiquity, equivalence to singularity, rarity, and authenticity,” as early as 1982, and used it as the basis for his scathing critique of the photography department at the Museum of Modern Art and, by extension, the larger “museumization” of photography.⁵

The body of this dissertation begins with a discussion of the “print renaissance” of the 1950s and 1960s, but ultimately homes in on the period from 1969 to around 1980, bracketed roughly by the opening of the Witkin Gallery in New York City and the formation of the Association of International Photography Art Dealers (AIPAD). The former is widely cited as the first commercially successful photography gallery in the United States, while the latter symbolizes the crystallization of a network of dedicated photography dealers operating specifically in the context of the art market. Geographically, my project focuses on the photo boom as it progressed in the United States, but necessarily touches on overlapping developments in Europe, especially London, the site of several important early photography auctions and an irresistible magnet for American dealers and collectors.⁶ The story of the boom is thickly populated by a fascinating cast of characters and groundbreaking institutions, the vast majority of which remain to be given their proper due in the historical record. Nonetheless, my project largely leaves to others the important task of sketching out the era’s social networks and affiliations.

⁵ Christopher Phillips, “The Judgment Seat of Photography,” *October* 22 (Autumn 1982): 28, 54. As Phillips notes, the phrase “museumization” was coined by *The New York Times* critic Hilton Kramer. Hilton Kramer, “Anxiety About the Museumization of Photography,” *The New York Times*, July 4, 1976.

⁶ Although it remains outside the scope of this dissertation, it is important to note that Paris, too, was an important hub for early collectors of photography. See Samuel Kirszenbaum, “Harry H. Lunn, La Vision Du Marchand,” *Études Photographiques*, no. 21 (December 2007): 30–43; Isabella Seniuta, “Histoire Du Eye Club: Les Valeurs de La Photographie: Paris-New York (1960–1989)” (PhD diss., Université Panthéon–Sorbonne, Paris 1, 2020).

Rather, I devote this dissertation to the professional practices, public discourses, and shifts in language that underpinned the emergence of photography as a fine art collectible. I explore early debates—predating even the photo boom itself—about the status of the “original” in the realm of fine prints and mass-produced multiples, and then look at the emergence of “vintage” as a vitally important marketing concept in the 1970s. And I examine how the evolving values of the photo boom gave rise not only to an increasingly lucrative market, but to specific practices within the field of photography, including the production of limited editions, portfolios, and “archival” prints; the professionalization of photograph conservation; and even early instances of forgery in the photography market. It is my assertion that these values and many of these practices have become so ingrained in the field of photography that they are rarely parsed or historically situated. And while some might initially seem to fall exclusively to the purview of the market, I insist that the values of the market have fundamentally shaped (and have been shaped by) the larger assumptions of the field, whether directly or indirectly, in positive or reactive ways.

Pre-History and Antecedents

It is an underlying argument of this dissertation that the practices and values of the 1970s photography market were not invented out of thin air, but instead represent the convergence and culmination of several historical threads and long-standing arguments. Many of these earlier ideas existed in essentially disjointed and isolated pockets, espoused by key individuals and institutions, and it was not until the photo boom that they coalesced into a widespread phenomenon. In particular, some of the market’s central conceits were handed down through the first decades of the twentieth century by a linked chain of influential American photographers, curators, and writers including Alfred Stieglitz, Ansel Adams, Beaumont and Nancy Newhall, and their

respective coteries and acolytes. Although the stylistic concerns represented by these individuals often diverged and certainly evolved over time—and Stieglitz in particular was famously irascible and at times uncooperative—all were propelled by their desire to win widespread public acceptance of photography as a fine art. Furthermore, all of these individuals were dedicated to an understanding of art photography that specifically foregrounded the original photographic print as the highest expression of a photographer’s craft, and resisted the idea of photographs as identical duplicates.⁷ They were also adamant that such prints had both aesthetic and monetary value, and belonged in museums, on gallery walls, and in the hands of collectors. Alfred Stieglitz made this position clear as early as 1903, in an article in *Camera-Kunst, eine internationale Sammlung von Kunst-Photographien der Neuzeit*:⁸

As is the case with all works of art that captivate the sensibility and the taste of the collector, connoisseurs are gradually beginning to gain a comprehension of the distinctions between prints from one and the same negative and to recognize that, fine as these nuances may be, they should not be underestimated. The fact that two completely identical prints cannot be produced will gradually become known. Certainly this influences the market price of the unique print, although the uninitiated cannot explain such a great increase in value.⁹

It comes as no surprise that Stieglitz should appear among the first in line to lay the groundwork for what would, after a delay of some decades, become the overwhelming market emphasis on the original photographic print as a collectible art object. It is also no coincidence that the

⁷ It is important to note here that both Stieglitz and Peter Henry Emerson, many of whose ideas were highly influential for the younger photographer, were also ardent proponents of photogravure. Although technically a medium for photomechanical reproduction, both Stieglitz and Emerson believed it capable of producing fine prints that could rightly be considered “original” and hold their own alongside gelatin silver or even platinum prints. See Nancy Newhall, *P.H. Emerson: The Fight for Photography as a Fine Art* (New York: Aperture, Inc., 1975); Estelle Jussim, “Technology or Aesthetics: Alfred Stieglitz and Photogravure,” *History of Photography* 3, no. 1 (January 1979): 81–92.

⁸ Newhall translates the title of the journal as “Camera Art, An International Collection of Pictorial Photography,” although the literal translation is somewhat different: “Camera Art, An International Collection of Modern Art Photographs.”

⁹ Alfred Stieglitz, “The Collector & Fine Prints,” translated by Beaumont Newhall, *The Print Collector’s Newsletter* 9, no. 6 (January–February, 1979): 179.

English translation of Stieglitz's article, which originally appeared in German, was supplied by curator and writer Beaumont Newhall in the pages of *The Print Collector's Newsletter (PCN)* in 1979, at the apex of the photo boom. Newhall, along with his wife Nancy and their good friend Ansel Adams, was one of the most influential torch-bearers of Stieglitz's message well into the middle of the twentieth century.

I will be looking at *PCN* in more depth in my first chapter, but for now it is also worth mentioning one more article that appeared in its pages two years earlier, in 1977. In "On the Connoisseurship of Photographs," William Innes Homer offers a connoisseurial analysis of photographs from his perspective as an art historian specializing in traditional fine prints. But Homer is not concerned here with *all* photographs. Rather, he focuses on the work of the Photo-Secession, the rarified movement of early twentieth-century photography that, helmed by Stieglitz, was singularly dedicated to creating fine art photographs that bore an explicit relationship to printmaking and painting. Homer discusses the Photo-Secessionists' material techniques as well as the relative scarcity of their extant prints, their general indifference to signing or editioning their work, and even the purported unlikelihood of modern forgeries, all making a case for the desirability and collectability of this body of work. He also specifically situates his article against the backdrop of the photo boom, writing,

Within the past three or four years, interest in collecting photographs has grown tremendously. Museums have committed large parts of their acquisitions budgets to photography, and private collectors have turned to the medium with great enthusiasm and dedication. Photography has "arrived," after years of neglect, as a collectible art form. So new is widespread interest in the medium that principles of connoisseurship and historical knowledge have not kept pace with the rapid rate of collecting. While print (graphic art) collectors have a clear-cut set of standards, developed over the years, photography collectors, by comparison, have yet to see such principles crystallize.¹⁰

¹⁰ William Innes Homer, "On the Connoisseurship of Photographs," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 3, no. 5 (November–December, 1977): 137.

These two articles—a modern translation of a seventy-year-old text and a modern examination of a seventy-year-old photography movement—highlight a few important ideas. As I will demonstrate throughout this dissertation, the 1970s photography market was in many ways founded on historical or “classic” photographs, especially (but not only) those that had an obvious claim to the artistic or aesthetic. The photography of Alfred Stieglitz and his associates were in the top echelon of this valorized canon, as evinced by their frequent appearance in museum exhibitions and publications, and in galleries and auctions.¹¹ The work of the Photo-Secession was easily understandable in the context of the art market, as Stieglitz and his associates went to great lengths to explicitly and implicitly position their photographs as *objets d’art*. It is well established that Pictorialist photography at the turn of the twentieth century was a direct aesthetic response to industrialization and the prevalence of commercial photography, as well as to the rapid proliferation of the amateur snapshot. Accordingly, among the basic tenets of the Photo-Secession and like-minded groups was the emphasis on the handmade and laboriously manipulated print, which served as an expressive—and singular—interpretation of the photographic negative. [Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3] In addition, by way of exclusive clubs, selective exhibitions, and elitist publications such as *Camera Work*, these groups cultivated a romantic idea of the photographer as artistic genius, and worked hard to distinguish their work from the general run of increasingly ubiquitous amateur photography.¹²

¹¹ In addition to the two articles under discussion, see also Alfred Stieglitz, “Camera Work” (Nendeln/Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1969); Jonathan Green, *Camera Work: A Critical Anthology*. (New York: Aperture, 1973); William Innes Homer, *Alfred Stieglitz and the American Avant-Garde* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1977); Helen Gee, *Stieglitz and the Photo-Secession: Pictorialism to Modernism, 1902–1917* (Trenton: New Jersey State Museum, 1978); Weston J. Naef, *The Collection of Alfred Stieglitz: Fifty Pioneers of Modern Photography* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1978), among others.

¹² Ulrich F. Keller, “The Myth of Art Photography: A Sociological Analysis,” *History of Photography* 8, no. 4 (October–December 1984): 249–75.

Collecting, too, was an important part of this program, although it was a far cry from what would become the highly lucrative commercial world of the 1970s market. As art historian John Pultz points out, Pictorialist photographers themselves—many of whom were independently wealthy—were their own most avid collectors, believing that “a collection of the best examples of their peers’ work would be proof of photography’s artistic worth.”¹³ Importantly, Stieglitz donated twenty-seven of his own photographs to the Museum of Fine Arts Boston in 1924, making the museum among the first in the United States to collect photography.¹⁴ He donated a group of twenty-two works by both himself and a selection of his peers to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1928, and another 419 prints in 1933, fully sixty years before that institution established a dedicated photography department.¹⁵ Despite this long delay, Stieglitz’s gifts were an important harbinger for art photography. The Met, like many others, already housed thousands of photographs—primarily documentation of other art works in the collection—but 1928 marked the first time it acquired photographs specifically on the basis of artistic merit.¹⁶

In his *Camera-Kunst* article, Stieglitz further insists that the artistic value of a photographic print necessarily correlates with its market value. Not all prints, he writes, even those made from the same negative, should be counted as equal, either aesthetically or monetarily. The corollary point, another lynchpin of the photo boom, is his assertion of the “fact”

¹³ John Pultz, “Collectors of Photography,” in *A Personal View: Photography in the Collection of Paul F. Walter* (New York: Museum of Modern Art; Boston: Distributed by New York Graphic Society Books, 1985): 13. See also Keller, “The Myth of Art Photography: A Sociological Analysis,” 256.

¹⁴ These were joined in 1950 by another forty-two prints, donated by Stieglitz’s widow Georgia O’Keeffe.

¹⁵ Malcolm Daniel, “Photography at the Metropolitan: William M. Ivins and A. Hyatt Mayor,” *History of Photography* 21, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 111–112. The 1928 donation was given anonymously, “in the names of people who had supported him over the years.”

¹⁶ Daniel, “Photography at the Metropolitan,” 110.

that “two completely identical prints cannot be produced.”¹⁷ Even if one wished it, Stieglitz implies, the creation of exact photographic duplicates is an impossibility, and some prints will always be better and more valuable than others. In keeping with his and the Photo-Secessionists’ elitist values, he also acknowledges that there are many “uninitiated” individuals for whom such distinctions will remain entirely opaque. This idea that the true appreciation of original photographs is limited to a select cognoscenti is one that continued to circulate over the following decades. And while the elitist implications may have softened, as recently as 2018 former Sotheby’s department head Juliet Hacking called connoisseurship “a cornerstone of the evolution of a sustainable market for art photography” and noted that it remains a crucial part of collecting photographs.¹⁸ Needless to say, art connoisseurship has a long and storied history, but it was arguably not until the Pictorialists that it began to be applied specifically to photographs.¹⁹

It is also important to note that in Stieglitz’s article and in Homer’s, photograph connoisseurship is specifically linked to the practices and values of traditional printmaking. Stieglitz cites the aesthetic and financial valuation of etched or engraved “Artist’s Proofs” as justification for paying “a handsome sum of hard cash” for an exceptionally beautiful gum print by a fellow photographer.²⁰ And Homer notes that, given the Photo-Secessionist predilection for expressively hand-worked photographs, “At no other time [than the turn of the twentieth century] did the techniques of photography and the other print processes so closely approximate each

¹⁷ Stieglitz, “The Collector and Fine Prints,” 179.

¹⁸ Juliet Hacking, *Photography and the Art Market*, Handbooks in International Art Business (London: Lund Humphries Publishers Ltd., 2018), 66–67.

¹⁹ That said, there were also earlier collectors who might be classified as connoisseurs of photographs, although they were perhaps outliers in their own time. See for example Mark Haworth-Booth, “A Connoisseur of the Art of Photography in the 1850s: The Rev. C. H. Townsend,” *New Mexico Studies in the Fine Arts* 9 (1984): 7–15.

²⁰ Stieglitz, “The Collector and Fine Prints,” 179. Unfortunately Stieglitz does not specify what gum print, or by whom, he was so eager to obtain.

other.”²¹ But the fact that Pictorialist photographers literally used printmaking techniques to make their works is almost beside the point. Homer makes the case that, overall, “the acts of connoisseurship of photographs and of the traditional graphic arts are similar.” Both, he says, “are media of ‘multiple originals,’ and the standards for judging their artistic merit are comparable: strength of design, significance of content, and quality of ‘impression’ (or printing, in the case of the photograph).”²² Stieglitz and Homer are, from their respective vantage points, both talking about a rather short-lived historical moment in which art photography and printmaking closely converged. But the romantic style that defined Pictorialist photography was soon discarded by Stieglitz himself in favor of the unmanipulated, “straight,” or “pure” approach that came to define photographic modernism. His younger acolytes, including Paul Strand, Edward Weston, and Ansel Adams, sometimes aligned their work with avant garde painting, but they rejected the notion that photography should borrow techniques or aesthetics from other mediums, including printmaking.²³ Nonetheless, I argue that the evaluative standards and language of fine printmaking continued to be applied even to straight photography—particularly in the context of collecting—throughout the next several decades, and that these ultimately became foundational to the 1970s photography market.

In her 2010 doctoral dissertation, Erin O’Toole has done valuable work connecting the dots between Alfred Stieglitz’s programmatic approach to photography and those of Ansel Adams and Beaumont and Nancy Newhall.²⁴ The latter three were, in turn, jointly instrumental

²¹ Homer, “Connoisseurship of Photographs,” 137.

²² Homer, 138.

²³ See for example Paul Strand, “Photography,” *Camera Work* (June 1917): 3–5; Edward Weston, “Photography—Not Pictorial,” *Camera Craft* XXXVII, no. 7 (July 1930), 313–320. Ansel Adams, “An Exposition of My Photographic Technique,” *Camera Craft* XLI, no. 1 (January 1934): 19–25.

²⁴ Erin O’Toole, “No Democracy in Quality: Ansel Adams, Beaumont and Nancy Newhall, and the Founding of the Department of Photographs at the Museum of Modern Art” (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 2010).

in the 1940 creation of the Department of Photography at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the earliest in the country and one that continued to function for decades as a “judgement seat” for the medium, as Christopher Phillips memorably put it.²⁵ Individually, too, Adams and the Newhalls exerted an important influence on the public’s understanding of and appreciation for photography. Adams became, by the 1970s, the country’s most successful and recognizable living photographer, and his workshops, books, and original prints were widely consumed by an enthusiastic public. Nancy Newhall, in addition to curating several important exhibitions at MoMA while Beaumont served in World War II, was a prolific and eloquent writer on photographic topics at a time when literature on the medium was relatively scant. And Beaumont Newhall wrote what is still one of the most widely-cited (and extensively critiqued) histories of the medium, his oft-reprinted and updated *The History of Photography, from 1839 to the Present Day*.²⁶

An in-depth discussion of these three foundational individuals lies outside the scope of this introduction, and is amply covered in the existing literature, although significant work about Nancy Newhall in particular remains to be done. I will also return to Ansel Adams in my final chapter, given his direct participation in the 1970s photography market. But the salient point for now, which O’Toole examines at length, is that, in the founding of MoMA’s photography department, the Newhalls and Adams consciously chose to treat photography as a mode of aesthetic visual expression in order to place it on par with established art mediums such as

²⁵ Christopher Phillips, “The Judgment Seat of Photography,” 27.

²⁶ Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography, from 1839 to the Present Day* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1949). Newhall also served as a curator (1948–1958) and second director (1958–1971) of the George Eastman House, and a professor (1971–1984) at the University of New Mexico. See also Allison Bertrand, “Beaumont Newhall’s ‘Photography 1839–1937’ Making History,” *History of Photography* 21, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 137–46; Anne McCauley, “Writing Photography’s History before Newhall,” *History of Photography* 21, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 87–101; Douglas R. Nickel, “History of Photography: The State of Research,” *The Art Bulletin* 83, no. 3 (2001): 548–58.

painting. This was in direct opposition to other circulating ideas about photography, namely that it was a “broad-ranging cultural phenomenon and means of communication” whose use across myriad fields of science and culture were just as, if not more, important than its use in art.²⁷ This conception of photography came roaring to the fore in the aftermath of the 1970s photo boom but also, as O’Toole makes clear, was already being hotly debated in the 1940s, when MoMA’s photography department was first finding its way. In the early days of the department, and throughout the Newhalls’ tenure, photography was exhibited in an “elegant, Stieglitzian” mode and was generally limited to “works of art.”²⁸ This was a departure both from Beaumont’s own earlier *Photography 1839–1937* exhibition and from the notoriously populist blockbuster shows staged by Edward Steichen, who took over as head of MoMA’s photography department in 1947. Newhall’s sprawling 1937 exhibition pre-dated the official establishment of the department, but was the foundation of his *History of Photography*, published in 1949.²⁹ The exhibition was notably catholic in its inclusion of various forms of vernacular photography, but Newhall largely jettisoned such work from later exhibitions and from the museum’s photography program, in large part due to Ansel Adams’s influence.

Together, Adams and the Newhalls picked up the baton of Stieglitz’s idea that, in order to be taken seriously, photography must be venerated alongside other forms of art within the context of the museum. What is somewhat less often discussed, at least directly, is that this necessarily foregrounded original photographic prints as sanctified objects for collection and display. Certainly Ansel Adams remains one of the most famous proponents of expressive photographic printing, and his numerous technical publications on the subject have been avidly

²⁷ O’Toole, “No Democracy in Quality,” 15.

²⁸ O’Toole, “No Democracy in Quality,” 173.

²⁹ There was also a catalogue for the exhibition itself. Beaumont Newhall, *Photography, 1839–1937* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1937).

consulted by generations of darkroom photographers. And, as O'Toole demonstrates, he and the Newhalls strenuously pushed back against attempts within the Museum of Modern Art to steer the photography program away from its early emphasis on aesthetics and "artiness."³⁰ In addition to collecting and exhibiting original photographic prints at the museum, the Newhalls and Adams were, like Stieglitz, also attentive to the wider circulation of photographs as fine art collectibles. Adams, for example, was an exceptionally early adopter of the portfolio format as a means of publishing limited editions of original photographs and selling them to both institutional and private collectors.³¹ Nancy Newhall also advocated for the creation of photography portfolios as part of MoMA's photography program in the mid-1940s. She proposed that editions of "original prints by outstanding photographers" be made available by subscription to interested institutions, noting that "the vast majority of people do not know what a fine original print looks like, nor do such prints exist in most institutional collections."³² Meanwhile, Beaumont Newhall experimented with combining museum exhibitions and print sales, organizing *American Photographs at \$10* at MoMA in late 1941, only a year after the photography department was established. The show featured nine prominent photographers who each agreed to print one image in an edition of ten, available to the public for purchase. Despite the now-incredible price of ten dollars for original prints by Ansel Adams, Berenice Abbott, Helen Levitt, László Moholy-Nagy, Arnold Newman, Charles Sheeler, Edward Weston, and Brett Weston, only fourteen of the ninety prints sold.³³ A little over ten years later, Newhall, by then a curator at the

³⁰ O'Toole, "No Democracy in Quality," 293-294. Juliet Hacking has also discussed the Newhalls' sense of themselves as beleaguered underdogs during their early years at MoMA. See Juliet Hacking, "Photographic Exceptionalism," *Photographies* 11, no. 2-3 (2018): 353-66.

³¹ Adams's first portfolio, *Parmelian Prints of the High Sierras*, was published in 1927. Seven additional portfolios followed over the course of the photographer's career.

³² Molly Kalkstein, "Inside the Box: Photography and the Portfolio Format" (master's thesis, Ryerson University, 2013), 15.

³³ O'Toole, "No Democracy in Quality," 327. See also "Museum of Modern Art Opens Two Small

George Eastman House, published an optimistic article in *The New York Times* about an apparent swell in collector interest in photographs. Although he admits that “the men of Fifty-Seventh Street” (one of New York City’s first major gallery districts) deny the existence of a market for photography, Newhall encourages his readers to buy directly from photographers or to take advantage of occasional print sales at museums.³⁴ What all of these tentative experiments demonstrate is that, for the Newhalls and Adams, the sale of original prints went hand in hand with the widespread acceptance of photography as a legitimate art. Despite the pushback they received about their narrow focus on aesthetic photography—and the objections were indeed widespread and substantial—they continued to encourage both institutions and individuals to collect and exhibit photographic prints.

But Newhall’s admission that, by most standards, there was in the 1950s no real market for photographs is essentially correct. The first six decades of the twentieth century were littered with sporadic attempts to establish galleries specializing in photographs—perhaps more attempts than are often accounted for—but until the late 1960s these were generally short-lived and/or financially unsuccessful. The earliest and best-known example is Alfred Stieglitz’s gallery, initially called the Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession, and later referred to simply as 291, after its first address at 291 Fifth Avenue, which he ran from 1905 to 1917.³⁵ From 1931 to 1949, Julien Levy oversaw his eponymous gallery, also in New York City, from which he sold photographs along with other

Exhibitions: American Photographs and American Silk Screen Prints,” Museum of Modern Art press release, December 1, 1941, <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/3021>.

³⁴ Beaumont Newhall, “Collectors Turn to Photographs,” *The New York Times*, December 7, 1952. Although Newhall’s own attempt to sell photographs at MoMA clearly fell short, his article indicates that others continued to experiment with the format. MoMA itself held a photography sale, *Christmas Photographs*, in 1951, followed by a similar attempt by the American Society of Magazine Photographers. See “Three Forthcoming Photography Exhibitions at Museum,” Museum of Modern Art press release, October 8, 1951, <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/3281>.

³⁵ Stieglitz also ran two subsequent galleries, the Intimate Gallery (New York, 1921–1929) and An American Place (New York, 1929–1946), although neither focused exclusively on photographs.

examples of chiefly surrealist art.³⁶ And from 1954 to 1961, Helen Gee ran the now-legendary Limelight Gallery, widely considered the first significant photography gallery in the post-war United States. From there, histories of photography often leap ahead to the Witkin Gallery, which opened in 1969 and remains firm in its reputation as the country's first truly prosperous photography gallery. It is worth pointing out, however, that in the 1950s and early 1960s, several more galleries opened, some of which operated for years, even decades. Some of these are still remembered by a few stalwarts of the era, but few have ever been given their proper due. In 1954, for example, Oliver Gagliani, Stan Zrnich, Charles Wong, and others opened the Bay Street Photographers Gallery in San Francisco.³⁷ Roy DeCarava ran A Photographer's Gallery from 1955 to 1957 in New York,³⁸ the Carl Siembab Gallery opened in 1955 in Boston,³⁹ Arthur Freed opened A Photographer's Gallery in 1957 in San Francisco,⁴⁰ and Larry Siegel established Image Gallery in 1959 in New York.⁴¹ Galleries that emerged in the 1960s included the Heliography Gallery⁴² and Norbert Kleber's Underground Gallery,⁴³ both of which opened in New York in 1963. In 1964,

³⁶ Julien Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery* (New York: Putnam, 1977).

³⁷ "Two New Galleries," *Aperture* 2, no. 4 (1954): 41–42.

³⁸ Letter from Sherry DeCarava to Lee Witkin, with attached letter to Maggie Sherwood and additional gallery ephemera, April 30, 1978, box 28, folder 32, Lee Witkin / Witkin Gallery, Inc., AG 62, Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona; Jacob Deschin, "Gallery in Debut: De Carava Show Opens New Display Quarters," *The New York Times*, March 13, 1955.

³⁹ Lee Lockwood, ed., *A Photographic Patron: The Carl Siembab Gallery* (Boston: The Institute of Contemporary Art, 1981).

⁴⁰ Letter from Arthur Freed to Helen Gee, October 9, 1957, box 31, folder 4, Helen Gee / Limelight Gallery Archive, AG 74, Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona.

⁴¹ "The Image Gallery Redux: 1959–1962," Howard Greenberg Gallery press release, January 2014, <https://www.howardgreenberg.com/exhibitions/the-image-gallery-redux-1959-1962>; "Bio," Larry Siegel Photographs, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://larrysiegel-photographs.com/about-2/>. Siegel also founded the Midtown Y Gallery in 1970, and was its first director.

⁴² The former was established by the short-lived Association of Heliographers, which included photographers Nathan Lyons, Syl Labrot, and Walter Chappell. See A. D. Coleman, "'For What Else They Might Be': The Association of Heliographers, 1963–1966," *Photo Techniques* 20, no. 5 (n.d.): 33–37.

⁴³ David C. Kelly, "Price Sense and Sensibility," *Aperture* 12, no. 3 (1965): 130–31; Norbert Kleber, "Underground Gallery," *Norbert Kleber Founder of the Photo UNDERGROUND GALLERY* (blog), April 10, 2013, <https://norbertkleber.wordpress.com/2013/04/10/underground-gallery/>.

Ann Espe Dietz added a photography gallery to her Quivira Bookshop in Corrales, New Mexico.⁴⁴ Helen Johnston established Focus Gallery in San Francisco in 1966, and kept it running until 1985.⁴⁵ In 1968, Harry Lunn opened his print gallery in Washington, D.C., although it would be three years before he began selling photographs;⁴⁶ and Mark Steenerson opened the little-known Westbank Gallery in Minneapolis.⁴⁷ In 1969, the year that Witkin opened, so too did Tom Halsted's long-running 831 Gallery in Birmingham, Michigan,⁴⁸ as well as the short-lived One Loose Eye in Taos, New Mexico⁴⁹ and Garick Fine Arts in Philadelphia.⁵⁰ In addition, there existed several non-commercial spaces for exhibiting photographs throughout the United States, the majority of which have unfortunately slipped into obscurity.⁵¹ But even this gathering energy around the display and sale of photography paled in comparison to the frenzy just around the corner.

The 1970s Photo Boom

The phrase “photo boom,” which denotes the unprecedented explosion of photography-centered activity in the 1970s, is sometimes erroneously presumed to have been retroactively coined by

⁴⁴ “Bookstores — New Mexico | New Mexico Archives Online,” accessed January 5, 2023, <https://nmarchives.unm.edu/subjects/10954>.

⁴⁵ *Focus: Photographs from the Collection of Helen Johnston*. (Santa Clara, CA: de Saisset Museum, Santa Clara University, 1989).

⁴⁶ Michelle Bogre, “Harry Lunn,” *American Photographer* (March 1987): 68–74.

⁴⁷ Stephen D. Lewis, James McQuaid, and David Tait, *Photography: Source & Resource; A Source Book for Creative Photography* (State College, PA.: Turnip Press; distributed exclusively by Light Impressions, Rochester, N.Y, 1973), 154; “Photography of Howard M. Christopherson,” accessed January 5, 2023, http://www.iceboxminnesota.com/howards/ppd_5_02/steenerson.html.

⁴⁸ Lewis, McQuaid, and Tait, *Photography*, 145.

⁴⁹ Exhibition announcement, box 74, folder 12, Lee Witkin / Witkin Gallery, Inc., AG 62, Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona.

⁵⁰ “Exhibits of Photos Launch the Garick,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 8, 1969.

⁵¹ These include the Little Gallery in the New York Public Library Hudson Park Branch, which was run by Alice Vielehr in the 1950s; the Photographic Gallery at Middle Tennessee State University (1964); East Street Gallery in Grinnell, Iowa (1967); Exposure Gallery in New York (1968); and Center of the Eye in Aspen, Colorado (1969).

later observers, or to have only emerged at the end of the decade.⁵² In fact, the term appeared in print as early as 1974, when *The New York Times* photography critic Gene Thornton used it to indicate that there were “now enough private and institutional collectors to make [photography] a saleable product.”⁵³ Just as importantly, he noted, “at the same time that photography has become commercial, it has become intellectual,” pointing to the sudden proliferation of serious (and specifically non-technical) photography writing in a growing array of publications.⁵⁴ Taken as a whole, the photo boom comprised more than just rising prices for photographs, and more than just a few new writers turning their attention to the medium. Indeed, the boom encompassed a truly exponential growth in galleries, non-profit photography centers, museum departments, university departments and programs, auctions, publications, and professional organizations and convenings, all dedicated to photography.

The reasons behind this sudden swell of interest in photography are complex and remain somewhat speculative. Curator Keith Davis has offered perhaps the most cogent explanation, suggesting that the photo boom was precipitated in no small part by the rise of television and the subsequent diminishment of photography “as the primary source of visual information about the world,” culminating in the shuttering of *Life* magazine in 1972.⁵⁵ He further proposes that the ephemerality and immediacy of television drew new attention to the “beauty and variety—the insistent objectness—of photographic prints.”⁵⁶ In 1985, photographer Lewis Baltz cited curator

⁵² Juliet Hacking, *Photography and the Art Market*, 158.

⁵³ Gene Thornton, “Photography Recognized as Art—Again,” *The New York Times*, September 1, 1974. See also Manuela Hoelterhoff, “Why the Photography Market Is Booming,” *The Wall Street Journal*, October 8, 1974; Hilton Kramer, “Boom in Art Photography Poses Problem in Expertise,” *The New York Times*, September 22, 1975. Thornton succeeded *The New York Times*’s longtime photography critic Jacob Deschin in 1970.

⁵⁴ Thornton, “Photography Recognized as Art.”

⁵⁵ Keith F. Davis, “The Photo Boom,” in *An American Century of Photography: From Dry Plate to Digital*, 2nd ed. (Kansas City, MO: Hallmark Cards, in association with H.N. Abrams, 1999), 388.

⁵⁶ Davis, 389.

and gallery director Marvin Heiferman by way of suggesting that the art world “seems to have a cyclical interest in photography that lies dormant for thirty or forty years, then re-erupts in a flurry of excitement for a few years, a behavior pattern rather like that of a hyperkinetic child discovering a new toy.”⁵⁷ According to Baltz, many of the major art movements of the 1960s had begun to fizzle out by the end of the decade, leaving photography as one of very few “toys” still “lying about the art world.”⁵⁸ He posited that photography’s apparent accessibility, given its often recognizable, figurative content, made it appealing to what he rather uncharitably described as “that portion of the American art audience too intellectually torpid to understand, much less take interest in, the kinds of issues raised by the best American art of the 1960s.”⁵⁹ Speaking more broadly and perhaps more generously, historian Raphael Samuel has remarked upon a growing orientation toward *visuality* in the 1960s, and positions the “discovery of old photographs” as just one element among many related cultural shifts.⁶⁰ Photograph historian Stuart Alexander likewise suggests that, in the 1960s, “photography was so readily adopted it seemed almost as though it was the new language of the youth movement.”⁶¹ Indeed, many observers have commented on the fact that the photo boom, including its commercial aspects, was exceptionally youth-driven. Dealers—many of whom were relatively young themselves—remarked on the influx of knowledgeable young people coming through their doors, although collectors, particularly those with a steady

⁵⁷ Lewis Baltz, “American Photography in the 1970s: Too Old to Rock, Too Young to Die,” in *American Images: Photography 1945-1980*, ed. Peter Turner (London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1985), 159. Baltz seems to be paraphrasing here, and does not offer a specific source for his citation.

⁵⁸ Baltz, 159.

⁵⁹ Baltz, 159.

⁶⁰ Raphael Samuel, “The Discovery of Old Photographs,” in *Theaters of Memory* (London; New York: Verso, 1994), 339. Samuel focuses on the United Kingdom, but both he and Keith Davis, among others, have commented on the outsized impact of period movies featuring photographers as central characters. Perhaps chief among them is Michelangelo Antonioni’s 1966 film *Blow-Up*, with its thrillingly stylish depiction of fashion photography.

⁶¹ Stuart Alexander, “Photographic Institutions and Practices,” in *A New History of Photography*, ed. Michel Frizot (Cologne: Koneman, 1998), 696.

supply of capital, may have skewed somewhat older.⁶² And of course it was the younger demographic that flocked to the growing numbers of university-level photography programs, fostering a savvy new generation of both practitioners and enthusiasts.⁶³

The success of the photo boom—that is to say, its success in finally elevating photography to a respected and valuable medium in the culture at large—is somewhat fraught. The 1970s were a heady period of abundance, speculation, and expansion for photography that ultimately came to an end with, or was at least temporarily slowed by, the economic recession at the end of the decade. Nonetheless, these years truly marked the climax of what many saw as a long-running battle to champion an underdog medium and carve out its rightful place as a serious form of art. But even as that battle was being won, important changes were underway in the culture, in the art market, and in the practice of photography. Scholars began to decry what they saw as the medium's cooption by museums and galleries, and a flattening of its fraught and multifaceted history in favor of a purely aesthetic appreciation. Ironically, this same emphasis on aesthetics was vital to the acceptance of photography as a legitimate field of scholarship in the first place—a field that had scarcely existed at all before the 1970s. But these critiques have proven durable and influential, shifting the study of photography in ways that have continued to evolve and grow ever more capacious. The photo boom thus represents both an important crossroads and a strangely isolated

⁶² Peter C. Bunnell et al., “Photographs & Professionals: A Discussion,” *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 4, no. 3 (July–August 1973): 56.

⁶³ The 1973 publication *Photography: Source & Resource*, itself the brainchild of a group of graduate students in photography, notes: “According to the 1971 Horrell Report on photographic education, published by Eastman Kodak, the number of students in courses leading to a degree in some aspect of photography quadrupled from 1968 to 1971. Further, there has been a 70% increase in the number of schools offering still, motion picture, and graphic arts photography courses.” Stephen D. Lewis et al., *Photography: Source & Resource: A Source Book for Creative Photography*, 7. For a comprehensive examination of the rise of photographic education during this period, including a discussion of the reports published by Dr. C. William Horell between 1963 and 1983, see Tal-Or Ben-Choreen, “The Institutionalization of Creative Photography’s Higher Education in the United States and Canada, c. 1960-1989” (PhD diss., Montreal, QC, Concordia University, 2021). See also Baltz, “Too Old to Rock, Too Young to Die,” 157–158.

moment in time. It was the culmination of a decades-long modernist argument in favor of photography's exceptional and expressive aesthetic qualities; and that argument's last gasp as the medium became a hallmark of postmodernist and conceptual art and criticism, reclaimed for its deadpan commercialism and its ubiquity across myriad cultural fields.

I suggest, however, that the volatility of this historical moment and the swift academic backlash against the institutional developments of the photo boom have meant that that this short-lived but deeply influential period has rarely been systematically studied. Scholars have been quick to dismiss the ethos of the boom—and the market in particular—as essentially conservative, and have been reluctant to examine in depth its ongoing significance for the field. In her article “Original Copies: How Film and Video Became Art Objects,” film historian Erika Balsom makes this incisive observation:

Questions concerning the sale and pricing of art are frequently left out of scholarly discourse; they are presumably thought to be vulgar and tasteless, a disavowed part of a business that never wants to recognize itself as such. However, [...] such practices in fact have an intimate relationship to the symbolic value attached to a given art object, as well as a direct impact on how that object may be collected and archived.⁶⁴

The objections to an exclusively aesthetic appreciation of photography are well justified, as are many of the critiques of the commercialism that underpinned the energy of the 1970s photo boom. And yet the birth of the first viable economic system for buying and selling photographs is a crucial part of the medium's history, and has had an unmistakable impact on the very existence of the history of photography as a field of study. As Balsom rightly points out, the market and its institutions (galleries, auction houses, and so on) fundamentally shape the cultural value of an art object, and I would add that this applies whether or not one accepts the label of “art” for a medium like photography. As even critics of the photo boom have understood, the market has deeply

⁶⁴ Erika Balsom, “Original Copies: How Film and Video Became Art Objects,” *Cinema Journal* 53, no. 1 (2013): 100.

influenced how and where photographs are collected, housed, displayed, and studied.⁶⁵ Whether or not one agrees philosophically with the suppositions that bolster the market for photographs, eliding its existence and failing to contextualize its origins does the field a disservice.

Again, despite the photo boom's incalculable significance for the history of photography, the existing secondary literature on this period remains scattered, and in-depth explorations of the market specifically are even more scant. Most often, the 1970s have been covered in useful but relatively succinct chapters couched within broader chronological overviews of (usually American) photography. An early example is Lewis Baltz's delightfully titled "American Photography in the 1970s: Too Old to Rock, Too Young to Die," published in the 1985 survey *American Images: Photography 1945–1980*.⁶⁶ Baltz's canny and irreverent gloss on the period is most deeply interested in parsing developments in photographic practice during the 1970s. In particular, he discusses clusters of photographers represented by key exhibitions,⁶⁷ as well as the ascendance of color photography and the proliferation of photography publications, particularly "self-published 'artists' bookworks."⁶⁸ But he also charts the rise of undergraduate and graduate photographic education, federal funding in the form of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA),⁶⁹ the expansion of critical writing about photography, as well as the emergence of a viable market for photographs. On this last point, he mentions the early and unexpected success of the

⁶⁵ Douglas Crimp made this point regarding the reclassification of historical photographs in the collection of the New York Public Library, linking it to photography's rising star in the marketplace. Douglas Crimp, "The Museum's Old/The Library's New Subject," *Parachute* (Spring 1981): 35.

⁶⁶ Baltz, "Too Old to Rock," 157–164.

⁶⁷ In particular, and among others, Baltz discusses *Toward a Social Landscape* (George Eastman House, 1966), *Twelve Photographers of the American Social Landscape* (Brandeis University, 1967), and *The New Documents* (MoMA, 1967), all from the late 1960s; as well as *New Topographics* (George Eastman House, 1975). Curiously, Baltz does not explicitly acknowledge his own participation in the latter exhibition, although it is mentioned in the brief biographical note that follows the text.

⁶⁸ Baltz, 160.

⁶⁹ The NEA's Visual Arts Program awarded its first grant in support of photography to Bruce Davidson in 1968, followed by a formal photography program in 1971. See Davis, "The Photo Boom," 389.

Witkin and LIGHT Galleries, but ascribes even more significance to the incorporation of photography into the programs of established art galleries such as Castelli, Sonnabend, Pace, and Marlborough.⁷⁰ But Baltz's interest in the 1970s market is mostly predicated on its imbrication in the larger web of changes occurring in the practice and consumption of photography during the period. Thus he spends little time on the specific mechanisms of the market or on the individuals and institutions it comprised. His summary of the period is somewhat casual—lacking, for example, more than a handful of specific citations—but is nonetheless incisive and critical, and marked by the liveliness of an artist discussing a period of recent history in which he was intimately involved.

A few years later, Charles Desmarais contributed the chapter “From Social Criticism to Art-World Cynicism: 1970–1980” to the collection *Decade by Decade: Twentieth-Century American Photography from the Collection of the Center for Creative Photography*, edited by James Enyeart.⁷¹ Like Baltz, Desmarais focuses the bulk of his chapter on various trends and movements in artistic photography during the 1970s. But he does take some time to sketch out a general trajectory of the photo boom, and offers a provocative hypothesis:

The fact is that there was not one, but two photography “booms.” One of these—it could be called the “commercial boom”—was ignited by rapid increases in the prices of historical photographs at auction. [...] Another, more creditable and substantial expansion also took place in the seventies. This had to do with the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge about photography, its history, and its place in our culture.⁷²

⁷⁰ Baltz, 159. It is worth pointing out that Baltz himself was represented by Castelli.

⁷¹ Charles Desmarais, “From Social Criticism to Art World Cynicism: 1970-1980,” in *Decade by Decade: Twentieth-Century American Photography from the Collection of the Center for Creative Photography*, ed. James Enyeart (Boston; Tucson, AZ: Little, Brown, in association with Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, 1989), 85–102. Desmarais was then Director of the California Museum of Photography at the University of California, Riverside; Enyeart was Director of the Center for Creative Photography in Tucson, AZ. The volume also includes essays by Helen Gee, Van Deren Coke, Nathan Lyons, Naomi Rosenblum, and others.

⁷² Desmarais, “Social Criticism to Art World Cynicism,” 98.

From Desmarais's vantage point at the end of the 1980s, the commercial aspects of the photo boom—the new galleries, the rising prices, and even the abundance of publications—could be seen as a bubble that had finally burst with the onset of the economic recession. Scholarly interest in the medium, meanwhile, he saw as the boom's real legacy. To a certain extent, Desmarais was right: the photo boom did signal the advent of a new field of scholarship dedicated to photography, one that has continued to expand and diversify in the years since. And the absolute frenzy of commercial activity that characterized the 1970s couldn't maintain the same heated momentum forever. But with several more decades of hindsight, it is also now clear that photography has remained an important and vibrant sector of the art market, even if its fortunes have ebbed and flowed, and its boundaries—those between photography and the rest of the art world—have sometimes become less distinct. Desmarais acknowledges this as well, even in 1989: "Prices, galleries, and individual artists may have had their ups and downs during the decade, but once the major communication lines were accessible, photographers could share ideas among themselves and with a wide audience. Photography has not been the same since."⁷³

Keith Davis's chapter sub-section in *An American Century of Photography: From Dry-Plate to Digital*, cited earlier, which was first published in 1995 and expanded in 1999, is still arguably the best and widest-ranging summary of the photo boom as such.⁷⁴ The section appears as part of the volume's capacious chapter on photography from 1965 onward, the majority of which is given over to a remarkably nuanced and detailed exploration of major photography movements from the last three and a half decades of the twentieth century, including a robust contextualization of their social and political milieux. Davis's impeccable scholarship is also brought to bear on the photo boom, and although he covers many of the same facets that Desmarais and Baltz touched on

⁷³ Desmarais, "Social Criticism to Art World Cynicism," 85.

⁷⁴ Davis, "The Photo Boom," 388–397.

earlier—including photographic education, federal funding, criticism, popular publications, collecting, galleries, museums, and auction sales—he does so with an additional two decades of perspective as well as a much greater level of specificity. But although the section’s ten pages and copious footnotes are packed with important details, and it stands as a crucial point of departure for any preliminary research on the photo boom, it necessarily remains a way-station in a much larger narrative.

Douglas Nickel’s important 2001 article *History of Photography: The State of Research*, makes only passing mention of the photo boom, noting that “with the growth of a collecting market for photography in the 1970s and 1980s and its mounting assimilation by the museum into the precincts of high art, the theoretical limits and market interests of formalist criticism’s application to photography—especially vernacular photography—became apparent to several writers, most of whom approached the subject from outside its perceived disciplinary boundaries.” He later asserts, “It is important to note that the postmodern critique of photography responded directly to its apotheosis as a museum object.”⁷⁵ Nickel’s situation of the photo boom as an instigating factor in the advent of postmodernist critique of photography is astute and, I think, fundamentally accurate. But his analysis replicates those critics’ tendency to gloss over the complexity and significance of the photo boom and the photography market in and of themselves.

Juliet Hacking’s more recent book, *Photography and the Art Market*, offers an overdue history of the photography market from the early years of the medium through the contemporary moment, with a fifteen-page chapter dedicated to the photo boom.⁷⁶ Although Hacking’s book is more narrowly focused on the photography market, her treatment of the 1970s is scarcely more detailed than Davis’s, given that it too is part of a broader project. The first half of *Photography*

⁷⁵ Nickel, “History of Photography: The State of Research,” 554.

⁷⁶ Hacking, “The Photo Boom, 1969 to 1980,” in *Photography and the Art Market*, 158-188.

and the Art Market is given over to advising would-be collectors, and it is only in the second half that Hacking turns to the market's history. Although helpful for situating the developments of the photo boom within a longer trajectory, Hacking's book tends to follow in the footsteps of other mass-market collecting guides—which I discuss in Chapter Two—rather than attempting an in-depth historical excavation. Meanwhile Gilles Mora's 2007 *The Last Photographic Heroes: American Photographers of the Sixties and Seventies* is a dedicated, if relatively breezy, overview of the 1960s and 1970s but, as the title indicates, is mostly focused on specific photographers and photographic practice.⁷⁷ His chapter on the 1970s includes a brisk two pages about the photography market, mostly concerning the rise of galleries—Witkin in particular—and offering little real detail.⁷⁸

Another recent look at photography's place in the art world of the 1970s and beyond is Andy Grundberg's 2021 book *How Photography Became Contemporary Art*.⁷⁹ In his introduction, Grundberg frames his narrative as a corrective to the preponderance of existing accounts focusing on the institutions that supported photography's efflorescence in the 1970s and 1980s. These institutions, he says, are "symptoms and not causes; what changed contemporary art was art itself and the artists who made it."⁸⁰ But such a distinction seems reductive. Photography institutions in the 1970s played an important role not only in exhibiting and selling photographs but in training photographers, creating communities, and generating dialogue and critique. And the artists to

⁷⁷ Gilles Mora, *The Last Photographic Heroes: American Photographers of the Sixties and Seventies*, English language ed. (New York: Abrams, 2007).

⁷⁸ "American Photography of the Seventies: The Making of Heroes," in *The Last Photographic Heroes*, 126–41.

⁷⁹ Andy Grundberg, *How Photography Became Contemporary Art: Inside an Artistic Revolution from Pop to the Digital Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021).

⁸⁰ Grundberg, *How Photography Became Contemporary Art*, 3. Although Grundberg's comment seems to suggest an existing mass of literature about 1970s photography institutions, the lack of a specific citation leaves me unsure to which publications he is specifically referring.

whom Grundberg refers were often instrumental in creating and populating these institutions, and in shaping the discourse that would inform future generations of practitioners. Overall, his book is chiefly a kind of expanded memoir, an on-the-ground account of the photography and contemporary art worlds in which the author participated—and continues to participate—as a critic and writer. As such it stands as a valuable, if not strictly academic, study of this vibrant and still-recent period. But although Grundberg does touch on the world of galleries and dealers, his chief concerns lie elsewhere, and the market as such is not examined in depth.

But the publication of *How Photography Became Contemporary Art* also raises an important point: the photo boom is still *recent* history. A significant number of its participants are still alive as of this writing, making my analysis both timely and time-sensitive. It also explains why much of the scholarship on this period relies on social history, interviews, and first-person narratives. This includes two recent dissertations by Tal-Or Ben-Choreen and Isabella Seniuta, which explore the social networks that scaffolded, respectively, the expansion of photographic education in the United States and Canada from the 1960s through the 1980s; and the art photography market in the U.S. and France during the same period.⁸¹ Both of these projects lean heavily on the authors' interviews with living subjects, and Seniuta in particular devotes the second volume of her dissertation to these interviews. Mary Statzer's earlier dissertation on the 1970 "Photography Into Sculpture" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art similarly foregrounded interviews with participating artists as well as the show's curator, Peter Bunnell.⁸² And in 2015, the Center for the History of Collecting at the Frick Art Reference Library held a lively

⁸¹ Ben-Choreen, "Creative Photography's Higher Education;" Seniuta, "Histoire Du Eye Club."

⁸² Mary Kathryn Statzer, "'Photography into Sculpture': Peter Bunnell, Robert Heinecken and Experimental Forms of Photography Circa 1970" (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 2015). Statzer also edited a book based on her dissertation: *The Photographic Object 1970* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2016).

symposium, *Seen Through the Collector's Lens: 150 Years of Photography*.⁸³ While not an academic publication per se, this two-day event comprised a series of lectures by curators, auction house experts, historians, and collectors, about the history of photography and collecting, and was notable for its inclusion of important participants in the 1970s photo boom.⁸⁴

Another relatively recent dissertation that dealt with the 1970s photo boom is Jessica McDonald's work on the sphere of influence centered around Nathan Lyons, the Visual Studies Workshop, and the George Eastman House in Rochester, New York.⁸⁵ McDonald's dissertation is one of very few to look specifically at the market during this period, but is primarily invested in reclaiming Rochester as an influential hub of photographic activity. Photography dealer Jill Quasha's 1980 MBA thesis, on the other hand, is noteworthy not only for its very early publication date—essentially contemporaneous with the end of the boom—but also for its narrow focus on the mechanisms of the photography market.⁸⁶ Meanwhile, a number of publications over the past several years have focused on the most famous early photography galleries, namely Gallery 291,⁸⁷

⁸³ "Seen through the Collector's Lens: 150 Years of Photography | The Frick Collection," accessed November 11, 2022, <https://www.frick.org/research/center/symposia/photography>. The symposium ran from May 8–9, 2015.

⁸⁴ These included Philippe Garner, Deputy Chairman, Photographs and 20th-Century Decorative Art & Design, European President's Office, Christie's London; and Denise Bethel, formerly Chairman, Photographs, Americas, Sotheby's. Bethel, however, did not present on the 1970s or 1980s photography milieu, but rather on networks of photography dealers in the early twentieth century. Meanwhile, writer Philip Gefter presented on Sam Wagstaff, one of the preeminent photography collectors of the photo boom.

⁸⁵ Jessica S. McDonald, "Centralizing Rochester: A Critical Historiography of American Photography in the 1960s and 1970s," (PhD diss., University of Rochester, 2014). McDonald also edited a volume of Lyons's output: *Nathan Lyons: Selected Essays, Lectures, and Interviews*, Harry Ransom Center Photography Series (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012).

⁸⁶ Jill Quasha, "The Emergence of Photography as a Business: An Important 'New' Collectible," (MBA thesis, New York University, 1980).

⁸⁷ Lillian K. Cartwright, "Alfred Stieglitz and 291: A Laboratory for Creativity," *Art Criticism* 24, no. 2 (2009): 38–54; William Innes Homer, "Stieglitz and 291," *Art in America* 61, no. 4 (July–August 1973), 50–57.

the Julien Levy Gallery,⁸⁸ the Limelight Gallery,⁸⁹ the Witkin Gallery,⁹⁰ and LIGHT Gallery.⁹¹ A few smaller catalogues have also memorialized some important but lesser-known galleries around the United States.⁹² There are also books that focus on specific photography collections, primarily those that reside in major museums,⁹³ as well as on trailblazing university photography departments.⁹⁴ These books have, to date, been overwhelmingly conceived as exhibition

⁸⁸ Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery*; Kate Ware and Peter Barberie, *Dreaming in Black and White: Photography at the Julien Levy Gallery* (Philadelphia, PA: New Haven, CT: Philadelphia Museum of Art; In association with Yale University Press, 2006).

⁸⁹ Carlton Gallery, ed., *Helen Gee and the Limelight: A Pioneering Photography Gallery of the Fifties* (New York: The Gallery, 1977); Lili Corbus Bezner, "Helen Gee in the Limelight," *History of Photography* 20, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 78–81; Helen Gee, *Limelight: A Greenwich Village Photography Gallery and Coffeehouse in the Fifties: A Memoir*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997); Peter C. Bunnell, *Helen Gee and the Limelight: The Birth of the Photography Gallery* (Chicago: Stephen Daiter Gallery, 2001).

⁹⁰ Evelyne Z. Daitz and Peter Bunnell, *The Witkin Gallery 25: A Celebration of Twenty-Five Years of Photography in New York City* (Toronto, ON: Lumiere Press, 1994); Jessica Lyn Mackta, "The Witkin Gallery, 1969–1979: A Critical Reading of the Paradigm of Photographic Display" (master's thesis, University of Arizona, 1997).

⁹¹ Michal Raz-Russo, "LIGHT Gallery: Body of Work" (master's thesis, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 2009). A 2020 symposium and exhibition, "The Qualities of LIGHT: The Story of a Pioneering New York City Photography Gallery," was organized by the Center for Creative Photography, which holds the gallery's archive. The symposium also showcased a short documentary, "LIGHT: When Photography Was Undiscovered, 1971–1987," directed by Lisa Immordino Vreeland.

⁹² Lockwood, *A Photographic Patron: The Carl Siembab Gallery; Focus: Photographs from the Collection of Helen Johnston*; Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, ed., *Taking a Different Tack: Maggie Sherwood and the Floating Foundation of Photography* (New Paltz, NY: Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, 2009).

⁹³ Daniel, "Photography at the Metropolitan;" Naef, *The Collection of Alfred Stieglitz*; Museum of Modern Art and Paul F. Walter, eds., *A Personal View: Photography in the Collection of Paul F. Walter* (New York : Boston: Museum of Modern Art; Distributed by New York Graphic Society Books, 1985); Roger Théron, Pierre Apraxine, and Anne de Mondenard, *Une passion française: photographies de la collection Roger Théron / Images from the Roger Théron collection* (Paris: Filipacchi Maison Européenne de la Photographie, 1999); SF Spira, Eaton S. Lothrop, and Jonathan B. Spira, *The History of Photography as Seen through the Spira Collection* (Denville, NJ: Aperture, 2001); Gloria Williams Sander and Therese Mulligan, *The Collectible Moment: Catalogue of Photographs in the Norton Simon Museum* (New Haven: Published for The Norton Simon Art Foundation by Yale University Press, 2006); Paul Martineau, Weston Naef, and Eugenia Parry, *The Thrill of the Chase: The Wagstaff Collection of Photographs at the J. Paul Getty Museum* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2016); Keith F. Davis, *The Big Picture: The Hallmark Photographic Collection at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art* (Kansas City, MO: Hall Family Foundation; Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 2018).

⁹⁴ Frederick S. Wight Art Gallery, *Catalog of the UCLA Collection of Contemporary American Photographs* (Los Angeles: The Gallery, 1976); Peter C. Bunnell and Claude Hubert Cookman, *Photography at Princeton: Celebrating Twenty-Five Years of Collecting and Teaching the History of Photography* (Princeton: Art Museum, Princeton University, 1998); David Travis et al., *Taken by Design:*

catalogues. As such, they represent a wealth of valuable information, and offer useful overviews of major collections and institutions, but tend somewhat toward celebratory rather than critical vantage points. That said, MoMA's 1985 showcase of the Paul F. Walter collection included John Pultz's carefully researched essay, "Collectors of Photography."⁹⁵ Pultz organizes his history into what he sees as distinct periods marked by subtly different motives for collecting photographs, usefully linking photograph collecting to broader aesthetic and cultural shifts. Denise Bethel, meanwhile, has written an exceedingly important article on the rare book sellers who dealt in photography during the early twentieth century, a milieu that she rightfully suggests has gone egregiously understudied.⁹⁶ Indeed, it seems to me that the rich foundation laid by both Pultz and Bethel has remained relatively unexplored in subsequent decades. Bethel's article in particular is exemplary for its painstaking work with rare book sellers' catalogues, often the only record of these foundational networks for the circulation of photographs and for the early aggregation of photographic scholarship. Her methodology has been an especially important touchstone for my own approach to the 1970s photography market.

Because the market is a distinct ecosystem from academia—although I propose that they are more entwined than some would like to believe—evidence of both the market's history and its impact is largely found outside of academic scholarship. I was struck by art historians Meaghan Clarke and Francesco Ventrella's invocation of what they call "'minor' forms of art writing" in

Photographs from the Institute of Design, 1937–1971 (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago in association with the University of Chicago Press, 2002); Stephanie Comer, Deborah Klochko, and Jeff Gunderson, *The Moment of Seeing: Minor White at the California School of Fine Arts* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2006).

⁹⁵ Pultz, "Collectors of Photography," 11–24.

⁹⁶ Denise Bethel, "At Auction and in the Book Trade: Sources for the Photography Historian," *History of Photography* 21, no. 2 (June 1, 1997): 117–28.

their study of women's role in the history of art connoisseurship.⁹⁷ Because of the historical erasure of women's (and other marginalized groups') contribution to professional and academic fields, and because of the "performative" nature of connoisseurship itself, the authors note that much important source material is found "in a number of textual formats that confound the very hierarchies of art history writing: travel writing, gallery catalogues, technical handbooks, and exhibition reviews."⁹⁸ I have found this to be true for the study of the 1970s photography market as well. In the decades up to and including the photo boom, expertise in the history of photography was not often found in academia. Rather, it circulated chiefly among dealers, collectors, and photographers themselves.⁹⁹ To understand how photographs were publicly discussed and understood during this period, I have accordingly turned to such "minor" texts as auction and dealer catalogues, collecting guides, and articles published in both the popular and specialist press. I also interviewed dozens of participants in the 1970s photo boom: dealers, auction house experts, curators, critics, and conservators. Many of the liveliest stories from these interviews are, unfortunately, not appropriate for publication, but these conversations were invaluable for giving me a holistic sense of the milieu and its idiosyncrasies, and the tight-knit network of individuals who gave it life.

I have also become increasingly convinced that much foundational knowledge about photography—its histories, its methods and materials, its practitioners—has been generated by both professionals and amateurs outside of academic circles. Despite its lack of institutional sanction, I refer to this knowledge and these practices throughout my dissertation as "scholarship,"

⁹⁷ Meaghan Clarke and Francesco Ventrella, "Women's Expertise and the Culture of Connoisseurship," *Visual Resources* 33, no. 1–2 (April 3, 2017): 3.

⁹⁸ Clarke and Ventrella, 3.

⁹⁹ Curators of photography belong to this group as well, but prior to the 1970s very few of these rare individuals actually existed, as very few museums systematically collected or exhibited photography.

in acknowledgement of its basis in diligent research and the robust exchange of ideas. Such scholarship is also based fundamentally in protracted *looking*, and several of the individuals I spoke with, particularly dealers and auctioneers, spoke wistfully of the enormous quantities of photographs that passed through their hands over the course of their careers. It should be remembered that the photo boom represented an unprecedented and arguably unrepeatably period of abundance, as great troves of historical photographs were literally uncovered, tracked down, and eventually offered up to a newly enthusiastic public. Many of the most important examples have since wound up in private and institutional collections, and are, in this sense, once again more or less inaccessible. Thus many photography professionals from this period had unfettered access to a quantity and quality of material that is simply no longer available in the same way, and their expertise should be considered in this context.

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is dedicated to parsing key practices and concepts that were fundamental to establishing a market for photography during the 1970s. One of the most important of these concepts is *originality* and the idea of the original print, which I explore in Chapter One. This chapter contextualizes the photo boom by examining its relationship to the printmaking revival that immediately preceded it. Photography's reputation as a medium of unlimited copies fomented considerable anxiety among collectors who placed a premium on both originality and rarity. But it is important to understand that, in the decades prior to the photo boom, traditional printmaking—another medium often defined by its multiplicity—underwent a dramatic rejuvenation of its own. With a few key exceptions, most print experts of this period both failed to remark on the similarities between fine prints and photographs, and failed to appreciate photography as a medium with its

own historical lineage and distinct aesthetic qualities. Nor has the relationship between the print and photography markets been widely acknowledged by scholars in the history of photography. Yet it is clear that participants in the photo boom knowingly drew on the tropes of traditional printmaking, including very recently codified standards and conventions, as a way of marketing photographs to a curious but skeptical public.

At the same time, while many 1970s photography dealers and collectors took their cues from the traditional print market, key differences emerged as well. Perhaps the most pervasive was the new idea of the *vintage print*, a designation that was applied exclusively to photography and that has continued to exert a powerful influence on how photographs are collected and valued. In Chapter Two, I sketch a preliminary chronology of *vintage* and its early evolution as a photographic keyword, using a range of period texts—including newspaper articles, magazine features, and gallery and auction catalogues—as the basis for my analysis. I examine the correlation between *vintage* and questions of originality, its place within a larger hierarchy of market value for photographs, and its persistent failure to account for photography's diversity and complexity as a medium. By doing so, I demonstrate this concept's importance in grounding a market for photographs that had previously been treated as little more than historical ephemera.

The emphasis on vintage prints also reverberated in other ways that have not been often remarked upon, particularly in the context of the photography market. In Chapter Three, I examine both the professionalization of photograph conservation and some of the earliest appearances of photographic forgery. Further, I demonstrate that both of these developments are predicated on the growing understanding of photographs as materially specific and irreplaceable objects, rather than interchangeable duplicates of a given image. Both photograph conservation and forgery are based on the same foundational idea of authenticity, and both rest on a narrow understanding of what

comprises value, whether in the market or in historical or cultural terms. Not all photographs are considered worthy of saving, and certainly not all are worth the effort of faking. By tracing the roots of these two different but interconnected strains of photographic practice, I explore some of the underlying assumptions and desires of the early market.

The concept of *vintage* effectively leveraged a kind of safe, built-in rarity inherent in historical prints. But there still remained the question of photographers who were still alive and well, and theoretically capable of turning out as many prints as the market might demand. If rarity couldn't be said to exist naturally in this case, the thinking seems to have gone, then it was necessary to create it. As in the case of "originality," the tools and the vocabulary for creating such rarity were ready to hand; one needed to look no further than to printmaking. Chapter Four turns to the widespread practice of creating limited editions of photographic prints, and to the specific format of the limited edition portfolio. I look more closely at the marketing strategies honed by dealer Harry Lunn and photographer Ansel Adams in the 1970s, and examine some of the specific questions and even controversies that have arisen around the practice of editioning photographs. I also look at the growing commercialization of the photography market over the course of the 1970s, as collectors began to consider photographs as not just serious fine art but as serious investments.

CHAPTER ONE: MULTIPLE ART BREEDS QUESTIONS

The advent of the photography market in the late 1960s and 1970s in many ways stemmed from a growing enthusiasm for and conversance with photography as a creative practice and as a ubiquitous form of visual information. But photography's very popularity may have also served as an initial barrier to its acceptance as a collectible art form. By the 1960s, the issue at hand was not so much the recognition that photography could be used in artful or expressive ways. Rather, the question was why one would bother to actually collect photographs when there were so many of them and they were so readily available—for example in books, newspapers, and magazines—and easy to reproduce. The challenge for creating a market for photographs was to establish a recognized value for the singular photographic object, not just an appreciation for the photographic image. And this, I argue, rested largely on the concept of originality, and specifically on the notion of the original print. *Originality*, in and of itself, is a complex term, and in the context of art comes freighted with a host of implications. An original work of art is traditionally assumed to be made directly by a single person, and to be the first and only of its kind, or at least to be the basis from which copies are subsequently made. An original work of art is not interchangeable with any other object. Originality, then, finds its foil in a medium like photography, which from its earliest years was inherently designed to exist in multiples and which has often been considered inexpensive, abundant, and even disposable.

But of course photography is not the only medium of multiples. For centuries before photography's discovery in the nineteenth century, tradespeople and artists alike used a host of reproducible printing processes such as etching, engraving, woodcut, and, later, lithography. And the practical, even commercial applications of printmaking have long existed on equal footing with aesthetic applications. The artistic uses of printmaking have, in turn, engendered a robust

legacy of collecting, connoisseurship, exhibition, and trade, and a sophisticated lineage of art historical scholarship. The breadth of this scholarship lies far outside the bounds of this dissertation, and indeed comprises its own, enormous field of study. And yet the long insistence on the purportedly unique qualities of photography has sometimes obscured its proximity to these older forms of printmaking. This insistence is found both among photography's modernist champions from Stieglitz to Newhall to MoMA curator John Szarkowski, and among subsequent generations of scholars who drew on the writings of Walter Benjamin and Roland Barthes to parse photography's extraordinary impact across cultural fields. It is not my purpose here to delve at length into the historical confluences of photography and printmaking,¹⁰⁰ but there is one point of overlap that stands out as crucial to my project. Although the photography and print markets tend to operate quite independently of each other, it is clear that many of the underlying values and practices of the photography market were borrowed directly and consciously from the world of fine graphics. Indeed the photo boom of the 1970s coalesced on the heels of what has been referred to as the print revival, also called the print boom or graphics boom, or the print renaissance.¹⁰¹ And yet the resonances between these two watershed moments, for prints and for photographs, have gone curiously unexamined. In this chapter, I will explore the overarching concept of originality, and in particular its historical significance to both twentieth-century

¹⁰⁰ In any case, this topic is, perhaps, finally garnering more attention. At the time of this writing, the Cleveland Museum of Art has just opened an exhibition, *Photographs In Ink*, curated by Case Western Reserve University PhD candidate Ben Levy, which runs from November 2022 through April 2023. Meanwhile, a symposium on *Photomechanical Prints: History, Technology, Aesthetics, and Use* is scheduled at the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. for late October 2023, under the auspices of the American Institute for Conservation and the Foundation for Advancement in Conservation.

¹⁰¹ See for example James Schuyler, "Is There an American Print Revival? New York," *Art News* 60, no. 9 (January 1962): 36–37; Carter Ratcliff, "The Revival of Lithography," *Architectural Digest* 27, no. 4 (April 1971): 68–77; Judith Goldman, "The Print Establishment," *Art in America* 61 (August 1973): 105–9. Danielle Fox, in her exemplary dissertation on the print revival, suggests that it would be "more accurate to speak of a reorientation and expansion of the print world than an actual revival or renaissance." Danielle Fox, "Multiple Originals: Art Publishing in the 1960s United States" (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1996), 4.

photography and printmaking. I will sketch an overview of the print revival with an eye to its special resonance with the development of a new market for photographs. I will also look in particular at the periodical *The Print Collector's Newsletter*, a small but significant publication that was unusually canny in its joint attention to both printmaking and photography in the context of the market.

The Mid-Century Print Revival

The late 1950s and 1960s bore witness to a dramatic rejuvenation of printmaking in both the United States and Europe, especially England. In the decades prior to this revival, American printmaking was the province of a relatively small number of artists who focused mainly on woodcut and etching. Lithography and screen printing had been overwhelmingly relegated to commercial, or at least mass-produced, applications, and expertise in the labor-intensive process of stone lithography in particular seemed on the point of dying out. The American print revival was principally instigated by two now-legendary women, Tatyana Grosman and June Wayne, whose passionate efforts to preserve and revitalize traditional lithography radically changed the understanding and practice of printmaking in this country. In their workshops, Universal Limited Art Editions (U.L.A.E.) and the Tamarind Lithography Workshop, respectively, printers worked closely with visiting artists, many of whom had little pre-existing technical knowledge of printmaking.¹⁰² These intensive collaborations often tested the limits of traditional mediums, acted as a proving ground for new techniques and materials, and introduced generations of hitherto reluctant artists to the possibilities of printmaking. Tamarind was also dedicated to

¹⁰² U.L.A.E. was founded in 1957, on Long Island, outside of New York City. Tamarind was established in 1960 in Los Angeles; it relocated to Albuquerque, New Mexico in 1970. Both remain in operation at the time of writing.

training master printers, the best-known of whom was Ken Tyler, who established his own Los Angeles-based workshop, Gemini G.E.L. (Graphic Editions Limited), in 1965.¹⁰³ Indeed, Tyler is often placed on par with Grosman and Wayne for his important influence on the diversification and even glamorization of printmaking in the 1960s. Although these three individuals were often pitted against each other in the press, they were each in their own way crucial for popularizing printmaking as a legitimate, versatile, and indeed collectible mode of artistic production. Perhaps the greatest difference among them, as I will discuss later, was their varying relationships to new technologies and commercial processes.

The origin stories of U.L.A.E. and Tamarind have by now attained nearly mythic status. The Russian-born Grosman and her husband Maurice escaped the Nazis and fled to the United States, ultimately settling in the 1950s in a summer house in West Islip, New York. Initially intent on producing silkscreen reproductions of paintings, Grosman was advised by museum curators Carl Zigrosser of the Philadelphia Museum of Art and William S. Lieberman of the Museum of Modern Art to produce “original” prints instead. No sooner had the decision been made, so the story goes, but she stumbled upon two lithographic stones lining the path in her front yard.¹⁰⁴ June Wayne, on the other hand, was already a practicing lithographer when she founded Tamarind, and was keenly aware of the paucity of expertise and quality materials for the medium. The establishment of her workshop was the unexpected result of an initially hypothetical plan “to restore the art of the lithograph in the United States,” which she submitted to the Ford Foundation at the request of W. McNeil Lowry, the director of its Program in

¹⁰³ At the time he established it, the workshop was called Gemini Ltd. Tyler renamed it in 1966, after partnering with Sidney B. Felsen and Stanley Grinstein to re-invent it as a publishing house rather than simply a printing studio. Pat Gilmour, *Ken Tyler Master Printer and the American Print Renaissance* (New York and Canberra: Hudson Hills Press and the Australian National Gallery, 1986), 8.

¹⁰⁴ Calvin Tomkins, “Profiles: The Moods of a Stone,” *New Yorker*, June 7, 1976, 45.

Humanities and the Arts.¹⁰⁵ Despite rampant skepticism at the Foundation, the proposal was funded with a three-year grant, as well as additional grants in later years.

For both Grosman and Wayne, the notion of lithography's *autographic* qualities was central to their commitment to and promotion of the medium. Although the interest in graphics during this period is sometimes attributed to the development of postmodernism and the attendant interest in commercial techniques and materials, in fact much of the initial impetus of the print revival was quite the opposite. The early emphasis on stone lithography was not only due to its endangerment as an art form, but because Grosman, Wayne, and others felt it to be, among the graphic arts, the most directly expressive of the artist's hand. [Figure 4] As Wayne herself wrote in 1959, by way of explaining her particular affinity for traditional lithography, "the stone's unique sensitivity reveals the artist's hand in an expressive intimacy unlike any other print medium."¹⁰⁶ Lithography is a complex process, in which the artist draws directly onto a prepared limestone slab with a variety of greasy materials, which are then fixed, inked, and printed, in a series of painstaking and often finicky steps. But its direct connection to drawing, and the great finesse required on the part of both artist and printer, were a significant part of its justification as an artistic medium.

Even prior to the print revival per se, the significance of the artist's hand was paramount for recuperating otherwise commercially oriented mediums for aesthetic purposes. Screen printing, for example, a stencil technique long associated with mass reproduction, was coopted by artists in New York's Federal Art Project for creative use in the 1930s. This adaptation hinged

¹⁰⁵ Marjorie Devon, *Tamarind: 40 Years* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 1. Wayne's proposal is printed here in its entirety.

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in E. Maurice Bloch, *Tamarind: A Renaissance of Lithography* (Baltimore: Printed by Garamond/Pridemark Press, 1971), 10–11.

largely on eschewing commercial methods for cutting stencils, and instead hand-applying tusche wash-out methods.¹⁰⁷ Around this time, Carl Zigrosser coined the term *serigraphy* to specifically designate this more artistic, autographic version of screen printing and distinguish it from the medium's commercial applications.¹⁰⁸ Zigrosser would go on to direct the Print Council of America, which was directly responsible for the development and dissemination of such print-related vocabularies and classifications.

The print revival also hinged on the collaborative nature of the new print workshops. One of the reasons that many American artists, particularly the Abstract Expressionists, resisted printmaking in the early decades of the twentieth century was because of the highly technical skills it required. Pat Gilmour has described the “disdain” with which many artists looked upon the “technical ‘cooking’ in which specialized printmakers allegedly indulged.”¹⁰⁹ The fact that Tamarind and U.L.A.E. paired artists with master printers was a major part of their appeal and their success. Painters and sculptors who might still be skeptical of printmaking's painstakingly technical processes were in effect shielded from such pedestrian concerns; rather, it was their unique vision around which each project was centered. The main requirement was that the artist himself or herself directly create the matrix from which the prints were made, in other words by drawing directly onto the lithographic stone. At the same time, as Pat Gilmour points out, with

¹⁰⁷ Carl Zigrosser and Christina Gaehde, *A Guide to the Collecting and Care of Original Prints* (New York: The Print Council of America and Crown Publishers, 1965), 54–55. Tusche is a waxy material that can be painted directly onto a screen to block out designated areas and act as a stencil. It is also used in lithography.

¹⁰⁸ Fox, “Multiple Originals,” 22. Fox cites Barry Walker's 1983 *The American Artist as Printmaker* catalogue in dating Zigrosser's introduction of this term in 1940, but I have been unable to find this specific claim. Other sources give alternative dates, as well as conflicting information as to whether Zigrosser was then director of the Weyhe Art Gallery in New York (1919–1940), or whether this was during his subsequent tenure as print curator at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. See for example Edie Scott, “The Serigraph: Allan O. Smith Waterworkshop Houston, Texas,” *Southwest Art* 11, no. 9 (February 1, 1982): 97; Harry A. Broadb, “The Versatile World of Prints,” *Arts and Activities; Skokie* 86, no. 3 (November 1979): 57.

¹⁰⁹ Gilmour, *Ken Tyler Master Printer*, 17.

the print revival emerged “a totally new profile for the sophisticated master printer,” who was increasingly acknowledged as a highly skilled—and often formally educated—artist.¹¹⁰ The significance of the printer’s expertise in realizing the artist’s ideas in the final print was, however, carefully balanced against traditional ideas of authorship as well as the demands of the marketplace. Despite the importance of the printers’ input and skill, they were rarely afforded the same level of recognition as the artists. The respective contributions of artist and printer were also inextricably woven into the question of originality, and of what constitutes an original print. Interestingly, Gilmour also points to the prevalence of musical metaphors in expressing the relationship between printers and artists. Tatyana Grosman, for example, “liked to quote Barnett Newman’s view of the artist as composer and the printer as performer.”¹¹¹ It is perhaps no coincidence that Ansel Adams, one of the most ardent proponents of the *photographic* fine print as well as a musician himself, has been persistently associated with an almost identical sentiment. As we will see later, however, an important distinction for modernist photography in particular was that artist and printer were very often one and the same.

Authentic Originals, Pseudo-Originals, and Multi-Originals

This emphasis on both the collaborative and autographic qualities of printmaking was key to the print revival, and tied in to another important concept: originality. In his 1976 book *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, the Welsh theorist and literary critic Raymond Williams parses the cultural diversification of *originality* as it developed in the eighteenth century and

¹¹⁰ Gilmour, 30.

¹¹¹ Gilmour, 31. The original quote is in Calvin Tomkins’ *New Yorker* profile: “Barnett Newman said a wonderful thing: he said that printing is like music—the artist is the composer, and the printer is the interpreter. And the interpretation is so important!” Tomkins, “The Moods of a Stone,” 45.

continued to function thereafter.¹¹² He notes that the word came to refer not only to the authentic as opposed to the copy, but also to “a kind of work distinguished by *genius*, *growing* not *made* and therefore not *mechanical*, taking its material from itself and not from others.”¹¹³ This sense of the word is entirely apt in the context of the print revival, when the peculiar nature of printmaking gave rise to a sustained flurry of activity around setting the terms for the “original print” and vigorously policing its boundaries. The crux of the issue was the inescapable relationship between printmaking and mechanical reproduction, and the fact that most prints exist in multiple copies, such that there is no single true “original.” This conundrum is one that will also be familiar to historians of photography, and it is important to emphasize that it became a major topic of debate immediately prior to the photo boom. The corollary to this issue of multiplicity, as suggested earlier, is the frequent division of labor in printmaking. Artist-printmakers have always existed, but it is far more common for the two roles to be carried out by different people. Originality, as it was defined and challenged during the print revival, came to be seen as highly contingent on degrees of involvement on the part of the artist and the printer, respectively. The weight of this term was deeply imbricated both in Grosman and Wayne’s missions to legitimize and expand the art of printmaking through their collaborative workshops and publishing endeavors, and in the development of a robust commercial market for prints in the United States and abroad. As Grosman herself put it,

William Lieberman and Carl Zigrosser made me realize the difference between work made without the artist’s collaboration and original prints, in which the artist participates. After that, I knew I wanted to make originals... What I really wanted was for the artist to work with his hand on a surface...¹¹⁴

¹¹² Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford: University Press, Incorporated, 2014). Williams’s project draws extensively, though not exclusively, on the Oxford English Dictionary.

¹¹³ Williams, 193. Italics in original.

¹¹⁴ Tomkins, “The Moods of a Stone,” 59.

Thus, as Williams's definition indicates, the question of originality had to do with more than just identifying false copies. Rather, *original* became a shorthand for what could be considered an artistically valid—and therefore valuable—work.

The ascent of the print market, and the systematic development of standards for defining original prints, owed a great deal to the Print Council of America. The Print Council, founded in 1956, was an organization of prominent museum curators and other print experts dedicated to raising public awareness of printmaking, and setting the terms for its appreciation.¹¹⁵ This work was lent a distinct urgency by what the art historian and critic Dore Ashton described drily as “the situation in printmaking” in the 1950s, namely a swelling tide of printed reproductions, mostly originating in France, after works by famous European artists.¹¹⁶ The problem, as Ashton and many others saw it, wasn't that these reproductions were of inherently poor quality, but that their status as reproductions was inconsistently and sometimes deceptively defined. Little distinction was made between prints that had been conceived and executed by an artist, and those that had been copied—sometimes photographically—by a printer from a pre-existing work, with or without permission or oversight. Between these two poles was a spectrum of variables having to do with the input of the artist and the originality of the image, the nuances of which often remained obscure to the unwitting consumer. And although some reproductions were signed, this didn't necessarily guarantee the participation of the artist. Some were known, in extreme examples, to sign blank sheets of paper without ever seeing the prints that followed.¹¹⁷ Perhaps

¹¹⁵ The Council officially defined itself as “a non-profit organization fostering the creation, dissemination, and appreciation of fine prints, new and old.” Print Council of America, *What Is an Original Print?* (New York: Print Council of America, 1961), 2.

¹¹⁶ Dore Ashton, “The Situation in Printmaking: 1955,” *Arts* 30, no. 1 (October 1955): 15–17, 60.

¹¹⁷ Zigrosser and Gaehde, *A Guide*, 17.

most egregiously of all, prices often failed to reflect such differences, and a whole range of questionable reproductions were sold as expensive “originals.”

The issue of originality and authenticity in printmaking, as Ashton emphasizes, goes back centuries, and has long been a central concern for scholars and connoisseurs. But this particular influx of ambiguously marketed reproductions destabilized the market in the 1950s and muddied an already tenuous public understanding of printmaking. The situation was perhaps both precipitated and exacerbated by the fact that the market for prints, and indeed for art in general, was on the rise. A newly expanding American middle class was growing increasingly interested in purchasing works of art, and as paintings were became ever larger and more expensive, prints offered a more accessible point of access.¹¹⁸ The demand for prints, however, was not necessarily matched by a widespread knowledgeability. Several articles written at the time begin with a description of a print dealer’s shop—or even a department store, say Macy’s or Woolworth’s—in which an impressive array of attractive prints by famous artists turn out to be mass-produced reproductions of paintings.¹¹⁹ Writing in 1963, Virginia Allen, then curator of prints at Tamarind, described a common strategy in lithographic reproduction. In such instances, a reproduction is produced in an edition of several thousand and sold inexpensively in bookstores, while a smaller subset of the exact same print is made on heavier paper, signed by the original artist (“for a handsome fee”), and sold in galleries at a significantly inflated price. “The unsuspecting buyer,” Allen writes, “is, in actuality, paying one hundred dollars for a signature.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Pat Gilmour, *Ken Tyler Master Printer*, 18.

¹¹⁹ Ashton, “The Situation in Printmaking,” 1955; Virginia Allen, “The Problem of the Original Print,” *Art Forum* 1, no. 10 (April 1963): 53; Milton Esterow, “Buyers, Sellers, and Forgers: The Strange New Art Market,” *Harper’s Magazine*, June 1, 1967, 83–86.

¹²⁰ Allen, “Original Print,” 53.

Many of the Print Council of America's efforts, therefore, focused on defining the terms for original prints, disseminating those terms to the public, and unofficially monitoring the market for unscrupulous sales practices. Their efforts resulted, in part, in the 1961 publication of the pamphlet *What is An Original Print?*, edited by the Council's lawyer, Joshua Binion Cahn.¹²¹ [Figure 5] Citing the recent explosion of interest in printmaking, and its increased significance both aesthetically and economically, the stated goal of the publication was "to 'promulgate standards, codes, formulas, and recommend procedures' in the graphic arts."¹²² The answer to its own central question is laid out with unambiguous concision:

An *original print* is a work of graphic art, the general requirements of which are:

1. The artist alone has made the image in or upon the plate, stone, wood block or other material, for the purpose of creating a work of graphic art.
2. The impression is made directly from that original material, by the artist or pursuant to his directions.
3. The finished print is approved by the artist.¹²³

The pamphlet lays out the major techniques deemed acceptable for the creation of fine prints: relief processes (woodcut and wood engraving), incised processes (intaglio), lithography, and stencil processes (serigraphy). It also pays considerable attention to the question of limited editions and signatures, noting for example that "one of the theoretical advantages of a limited edition, aside from its rarity, is that the prints are likely to be of finer quality because they were printed before the plate or wood block became worn."¹²⁴ Artists are enjoined to destroy or cancel their plates or blocks once an edition is fulfilled, dealers are encouraged to strive for transparency in describing their wares, and buyers are cautioned both to educate themselves and to insist upon written guarantees of originality when purchasing prints. Notably, if

¹²¹ Ashton, as well as Carl Zigrosser, were among those cited for their major contributions to the pamphlet.

¹²² Print Council of America, *What Is an Original Print?*, 5.

¹²³ Print Council of America, 9.

¹²⁴ Print Council of America, 13.

unsurprisingly, the only mention of photography is essentially pejorative, and refers to the use of photo-mechanical processes to make reproductions.¹²⁵

The Print Council's work also culminated in the passage, throughout the 1970s, of actual legislation in a number of U.S. states obligating dealers to guarantee the authenticity of the prints they sold.¹²⁶ Such legislation, as well as the Print Council's guidelines more broadly, were on their face intended to protect consumers and to create some semblance of clarity and consistency for understanding and investing in fine prints. Perhaps inevitably, however, tensions arose almost immediately between these decidedly conservative strictures and a number of significant shifts in the art world. Among these were the rise of the multiple as an important art form, and the recognition of photography both as a legitimate artistic tool and as a creative and collectible medium in its own right.

Printmaking and Mechanical Reproduction

As described earlier, both June Wayne and Tatyana Grosman were fundamentally committed to stone lithography, for its autographic qualities as well as somewhat more nebulous and romantic ideas about its aesthetic affect. Their resistance to the use of offset lithography—printed from metal plates rather than stone—and photographic transfer techniques was well remarked. Both felt, at least initially, that these techniques were antithetical to the hand-made, highly crafted nature of fine printmaking.¹²⁷ Ultimately, however, as Abstract Expressionism gave way to Pop, Op, and hard-edge styles, growing numbers of artists, including printmakers, began turning to commercial processes, industrial materials, and photographic source material. These shifts in

¹²⁵ Print Council of America, 12.

¹²⁶ See for example O. P. Reed, "Notes on the Sale of Fine Prints," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 1, no. 5 (November–December 1970): 104–5.

¹²⁷ See for example Fox, "Multiple Originals," 133–135.

artistic practice engendered much hand-wringing in certain quarters, and change came slowly. One storied example concerns the ongoing, if affectionate, tension between Jasper Johns and Tatyana Grosman. Johns, just two years out from his first one-man exhibition, began working with U.L.A.E. in 1960, ultimately making more than a hundred editions over the next two decades.¹²⁸ The artist, who had never made a print prior to Grosman's invitation but who quickly became known as a virtuoso innovator, claimed that "he began making lithographs because, knowing nothing about the process, he wanted to see how much he could complicate it."¹²⁹ By the mid-1960s, Johns became interested in incorporating photographic techniques, repurposing passages from existing works, and exploring the possibilities of offset lithography. When U.L.A.E.'s printers Bill Goldston and Zigmunds Priede purchased an offset press in 1971, Johns was the first artist use it.¹³⁰ To overcome Grosman's initial resistance, Goldston and Priede modified the new press, making it less automated and more "sensitive, hand-fed, and expensive to operate."¹³¹ In 1971, at the completion of Johns's celebrated *Decoy* edition [Figure 6], made almost entirely using this modified press, Grosman resolved to emphasize in U.L.A.E.'s documentation that the offset press was "hand-fed," thus insisting upon the artisanal quality of the prints despite their use of industrial equipment.¹³²

June Wayne, although also skeptical of photo-mechanical techniques, and generally supportive of the Print Council's stance on originality, showed a certain flexibility in some cases

¹²⁸ Johns's prints at U.L.A.E. are catalogued in Esther Sparks, *Universal Limited Art Editions: A History and Catalogue, the First Twenty-Five Years* (Chicago; New York: Art Institute of Chicago; Abrams, 1989), 346-389. Johns's first solo exhibition was at Leo Castelli Gallery in New York, in early 1958.

¹²⁹ Tomkins, "The Moods of a Stone," 62. See also Sparks, *The First Twenty-Five Years*, 125.

¹³⁰ Sparks, 140.

¹³¹ Sparks, 39.

¹³² Fox, "Multiple Originals," 144. Fox gleans many details of this story from her interviews with Bill Goldston. Esther Sparks notes that "even as it was being made, *Decoy* became the most celebrated print of its time." Sparks, *The First Twenty-Five Years*, 140.

as well. When the painter Josef Albers, for example, made his *Day and night* and *Midnight and noon* portfolios in 1963 and 1964, he worked closely with Ken Tyler, then still a printer at Tamarind. [Figure 7] The work's "industrial aesthetic," in addition to the fact that Albers himself had no physical contact with the stone, ink, or prints, left him feeling vulnerable to criticism about its originality.¹³³ To reassure him, Wayne wrote, "your lithos are original in every sense. ...When Balanchine creates a ballet, must he perform every leap himself? No, the dancers are his tools."¹³⁴ Later, as the proprietor of Gemini G.E.L., Ken Tyler himself came to personify an even less reverential approach to the cult of the original. On one hand, Gemini maintained much in common with both Tamarind and U.L.A.E, namely the collaborative production of fastidiously produced limited editions. On the other hand, Tyler was catholic in his enthusiasm for any new technologies and materials that he felt were necessary to fulfill his artists' vision. His workshop was notorious for turning out ever larger and splashier productions, many of which eventually entered the territory of what became known as multiples. [Figure 8]

The term *multiple* as it emerged in the 1960s was generally applied to three-dimensional works, often produced using industrial materials and techniques.¹³⁵ The Parisian art dealer Denise René claimed credit for the term, but according to some, it was already in circulation by the time she attempted to copyright it in 1967.¹³⁶ Multiples themselves ran the gamut from

¹³³ Pat Gilmour, "'Originality' Circa 1960: A Time for Thinking Caps," *Tamarind Papers*, no. 13 (1990): 28–29; Gilmour, *Ken Tyler Master Printer*, 39. The article by which Albers apparently felt especially attacked, although it did not mention him specifically, was Katherine Kuh, "The Lively Art of Fakery," *Saturday Review*, June 26, 1965.

¹³⁴ Gilmour, "Originality," 28.

¹³⁵ For a lively gloss on the period's debates about what exactly constitutes a multiple, and whether prints themselves count as such, see Pat Gilmour, "Notes Towards the Definition of a Multiple," *Art and Artists* 4, no. 3 (June 1969): 40–41. Tellingly, Gilmour concludes her article by noting, "Such is the fusion and overlap between the arts, that any too narrow definition, like the 'original' print, will backfire almost immediately."

¹³⁶ John L. Tancock, *Multiples: The First Decade* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1971), n.p.; "Letters: 'Multiple,'" *Art and Artists* 4, no. 3 (June 1969): 30. The latter is a rather pointed exchange between Denise René and Heinz Büttler of Zurich's xartcollection over the validity of the former's

ambitious, slick, and highly limited editions, such as those produced at Gemini; to others turned out in the thousands and sold inexpensively. Indeed, the question of whether multiples represented a significant challenge to the capitalist art market was a topic of some debate, as was the widening gap between the art object and the ostensible significance of the artist's hand.¹³⁷ In 1966, the English architectural critic Reyner Banham described what he called "the yellow pages aesthetic," characterized by artists' reliance on companies willing to execute relatively small runs of work in such industrial mediums and techniques as vacuum-forming, plastics, commercial enameling, silk screen, and metal welding.¹³⁸ The same year, in a catalogue essay for Marian Goodman's Multiples Gallery, Sam Wagstaff—then curator of paintings at the Wadsworth Atheneum—admitted that some viewers might still have trouble accepting multiples as legitimate art objects. "We have inherited a romantic 19th century love of the unique," he wrote, "the rare, the handmade, which makes it relatively difficult for us to subordinate ourselves emotionally, esthetically to anything machine-made." Still, he continued, "the artist has begun to show us that the products of machine and commercial processes have a personality of their own, which, if allowed to be themselves, also produce an esthetic effect."¹³⁹ Many commentators were also quick to trace a lineage for contemporary multiples stretching back not only to the readymades of Duchamp and the machine aesthetic of the Bauhaus, but to all reproductive art

copyright claim. The letters were published in *Art and Artists* as part of an extensive supplement on the topic of multiples.

¹³⁷ See for example René Block, "The Significance of Multiples," *Studio International* 184 (September 1972): 98.

¹³⁸ Reyner Banham, "Aesthetics of the Yellow Pages," *New Society; London* (August 18, 1966): 271.

¹³⁹ Samuel J. Wagstaff, in *Multiples Gallery, Inc.* (New York: Multiples Gallery, Inc., 1966), n.p.

Wagstaff's untitled essay was also reprinted a few years later as "Multiplicity in Art," in *Prints/Multiples: An Exhibition of Original Prints and Multiples* (Seattle: Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, 1969), 12–13.

processes, including bronze casting and, of course, printmaking.¹⁴⁰ It is also worth noting here that in 1964, Wagstaff curated *Ten Works by Ten Painters*, an exhibition and portfolio of “original” silkscreen prints by artists including Roy Lichtenstein, Ellsworth Kelly, Stuart Davis, Robert Motherwell, and Andy Warhol. The project met with indignation on the part of the Print Council of America, who were deeply offended that the artists didn’t make their own screens, most of which were reproduced photo-mechanically from existing designs. The rather large edition of five hundred was perhaps more subtly irksome as well.¹⁴¹ Significantly, Wagstaff also gained international renown just a few years later as an exceptionally discerning and idiosyncratic collector of photography.

Enmeshed in the question of multiples’ legitimacy were some of the same questions and concerns that dogged the early years of the print revival, and the efforts of the Print Council in particular. There was considerable discomfort with the fact that multiples were machine-made, that artists often had little physical involvement with their production, and that, in fact, some multiples referred overtly to pre-existing works in the same artist’s *oeuvre*. According to many artists, publishers, and dealers, however, multiplicity was an inherent part of the works’ content, a crucial aspect of their production that was planned from the outset. In this sense, they were in no way mere reproductions of a singular work, but were rather “multiple originals” in and of themselves.¹⁴² Likewise, the use of commercial processes was not simply expedient—often it

¹⁴⁰ See Tancock, *Multiples: The First Decade*; Barbara Knowles Debs, “Multiples: Pro, Con or Why Not?,” *The Print Collector’s Newsletter* 2, no. 5 (December 1971): 96–99; Charles Spencer, “Multiplied Confusion,” *Art and Artists*, no. 4 (June 1969): 29.

¹⁴¹ For a more detailed explanation of the exhibition and the Print Council’s response, see Fox, “Multiple Originals,” 130–133; and Gilmour, “‘Originality’ Circa 1960,” 29.

¹⁴² Fox, “Multiple Originals,” 179; René Block, “Notes as to Purpose, Set-up and Selection of the Exhibition,” in *Multiples: Ein Versuch die Entwicklung des Auflagenobjektes darzustellen = an attempt to present the development of the object edition: Ein Ausstellung*, ed. René Block (Berlin: Neuen Berliner Kunstverein, 1974), 10–24.

was no such thing—but was a carefully considered means of achieving specific aesthetic and conceptual ends.

The plastics, enamels, and silkscreens of the multiples movement notwithstanding, there was one mechanical technique that has arguably continued to exert a more diverse and wide-ranging influence on contemporary art than all the rest: photography. As already noted, the use of photo-mechanical reproduction was, for years, anathema to those attempting to recuperate fine printmaking as an artistic pursuit. With the rise of Pop Art in particular, however, this position grew increasingly untenable. Artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, and Andy Warhol, as well as scores of printmakers, not only made ample use of photo-mechanical reproduction, but incorporated pre-existing photographic images, often from commercial or other vernacular sources, into their work. The use of both photographic techniques and imagery in printmaking (and painting) was increasingly commonplace and its legitimacy accepted.¹⁴³ But what was less acknowledged in these circles, and what has continued to be overlooked, was the simultaneous emergence of photography as an aesthetic and collectible medium in its own right.

The Photo Boom

In the 1960s, at precisely the same time that the print revival was hitting its stride and the multiples movement was taking off, a number of new and existing galleries began to devote themselves to the appreciation and sale of photography as a fine art. This was followed in the 1970s by a veritable explosion of these and other medium-specific institutions, including

¹⁴³ In a few cases, exhibitions were organized around the theme of photography in printmaking. See for example Jacob Kainen, *Photography in Printmaking* (New York: Associated American Artists, 1968); Charles Newton, *Photography in Printmaking* (London and Tisbury, UK: Victoria and Albert Museum; Compton Press; Pitman Publishing Ltd., 1979).

museum and university departments, and a plethora of professional organizations and events.¹⁴⁴

Given the fact that this initial groundswell was slow to gain traction in the larger culture, it makes sense that the Print Council's *What is an Original Print?* pamphlet, published in 1961, failed to mention photography except as a proscribed reproductive technique. As the decade wore on, however, the often heated discussions about original prints and multiples continued to overlook the growing presence of photographs in the artistic and cultural landscape. As numerous journals and newspapers published articles with provocative and catchy titles like "The Problem of the Original Print," "Multiplied Confusion," "Multiples: Pro, Con, or Why Not?," and "If You've Seen One You've Seen Them All," few, if any, specifically acknowledged photographs as part of the same family.¹⁴⁵ In other words, what is missing is any sense of photography as a historical and aesthetic medium of multiples. Very few commentators seemed to consider the idea that photographs might be subject to some of the same questions that were being so vigorously applied to other kinds of serially produced art. Proponents of so-called expressive or creative photography had for decades, of course, grappled with the public perception of their medium as inherently mechanical and coldly reproductive, or the province of amateur snap shooters rather than artists. Now, in the 1960s and 70s, while on one hand photographic techniques entered the mainstream of painting and printmaking; on the other hand, photography was finally emerging as a medium with its own history, worthy of its own galleries, exhibitions, professorships, auctions, and so on. And yet this convergence seems scarcely to have

¹⁴⁴ The secondary literature on this development remains relatively scant, one impetus for the current project. Important exceptions exist, however, including Davis, "The Photo Boom;" Desmarais, "From Social Criticism;" and Baltz, "Too Old to Rock, Too Young to Die."

¹⁴⁵ Virginia Allen, "The Problem of the Original Print," *Art Forum* 1, no. 10 (April 1963): 53; Charles Spencer, "Multiplied Confusion," *Art and Artists*, no. 4 (June 1969): 29; Barbara Knowles Debs, "Multiples: Pro, Con or Why Not?," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 2, no. 5 (November–December 1971): 96–99; John Christopher Battye, "If You've Seen One You've Seen Them All," *Art and Artists*, no. 5 (November 1970): 64.

been remarked, despite the uncanny similarity in the conversations and strategies that both developments entailed. The fact that the photo boom followed so closely on the heels of the print revival and multiples movement seems largely to have escaped notice. In fact, one of the few places that this convergence was overtly recognized and explored was the small but significant periodical *The Print Collector's Newsletter (PCN)*.

The Print Collector's Newsletter

Founded in 1970 by curator and publisher Paul Cummings, *The Print Collector's Newsletter* was distinctive for its coverage of works on paper, and was specifically dedicated to providing resources and commentary on what was by then a thriving market for prints. The magazine's first editor was the print scholar and curator Judith Goldman. She was succeeded by Jacqueline Brody, whose husband bought the magazine in 1971. Although Brody's background was in economics, rather than art, she helmed *PCN* ably for nearly 25 years, from 1972 until it was sold in 1996.¹⁴⁶ *PCN* was never a big, glossy publication, but was instead, as its name suggests, a slim, black and white newsletter; "a little magazine," as Brody has called it.¹⁴⁷ But from its inception, it included substantial sections dedicated to institutional developments in the print world, as well as auction results, dealer and exhibition catalogues, and recently published prints, multiples, and portfolios. *PCN*'s inaugural editorial column, written by Cummings, notes that "the major art magazines have always treated prints perfunctorily, if at all, and what other publications there were, are by now either defunct or else of such limited circulation that the

¹⁴⁶ The first issue that Brody published as editor, rather than managing editor under Goldman, was volume 3, no. 6 (January–February 1973). Brody ran *PCN* until 1996, when it was sold to publisher Gabriella Fanning, and renamed first *On Paper* and then, in 1998, *Art on Paper*. It continued to run for eight years under Fanning, who in turn sold it to then-editor Peter Nesbett. The final issue of *Art on Paper* appeared at the end of 2009, and it officially ceased publication early the next year.

¹⁴⁷ Jacqueline Brody, conversation with the author, June 4, 2019.

majority of those interested in fine prints are never reached.”¹⁴⁸ *PCN* thus aimed to fill an important niche by providing not only scholarly articles about both contemporary and Old Master prints, but up-to-date market information for collectors.

Even more unusually, however, as early as 1971, *PCN* began to include photography in its coverage of the print market. If Cummings felt that prints were being given short shrift in mainstream art media, the same was even more pronounced for photography, which was emerging perhaps a decade behind prints as an important art form and collectible. By 1970 the significance of prints and multiples was relatively well-established, such that the need for a collector’s resource might be clear. Photographs, meanwhile, were just beginning to garner attention outside of a long-standing but diminutive community of acolytes. The Witkin Gallery, for example, stands as a useful illustration of this historical moment. When Lee Witkin opened his New York gallery in March of 1969, on a budget of \$6000 in personal savings, he considered it a long-shot and a labor of love.¹⁴⁹ Within six months, however, the Witkin Gallery was turning a profit, and within a year was being hailed as the first example of a commercially successful gallery dedicated exclusively to selling photographs.¹⁵⁰ It was in the midst of this transition that *The Print Collector’s Newsletter* appeared, making its sustained, matter-of-fact coverage of photography all the more remarkable. As the decade wore on, the amount of press devoted to photography, and specifically to collecting photography, ballooned exponentially, but in 1970 and 1971, this was not the case. Further, I would suggest that *PCN* was, and remains, one of the

¹⁴⁸ Paul Cummings, “Editorial,” *The Print Collector’s Newsletter* 1, no. 1 (March–April 1970): 1.

¹⁴⁹ Julian Weissman, “Lee Witkin: He Moves Photographs,” *The Press* 3, no. 10 (n.d.): 15; Gene Thornton, “Photography Is Making Him A Millionaire,” *The New York Times*, March 23, 1975.

¹⁵⁰ Weissman, 15. See also Jacob Deschin, “A Print Gallery Is Making Money,” *Photographic Business and Product News* 6, no. 3 (March 1970): 6–10; Ann Wiser, “The Man Who Put Photography on the Map,” *United Mainliner*, March 1982, 59–61, 106–7.

only sources to situate the new market for photographs within the larger context of the market for prints.

On the face of it, this connection perhaps seems obvious. Both photographs and prints may be generally categorized as works on paper, both are reproductive, and indeed they have long been grouped together in museum collections (that is, when photographs were collected at all). Nonetheless, as mentioned previously, the lively debates about prints and multiples roiling throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s paid little attention to photographs per se, as opposed to photographic techniques. And yet the question of “originality” in a medium of multiples, the role of the machine versus the autographic qualities of hand drawing, the use of technologies often considered commercial or industrial—of all these applied just as aptly to photographs as to prints and multiples. Indeed, some of the implications went even deeper. Despite the fact that stone lithography had languished as an art form, there was never any doubt that printmaking per se was an artistic medium with a long history and a canon of irrefutable masters. At the dawn of the 1970s, however, photography was still something of an unknown quantity, at least as far as the general public—as well as most museums, galleries, and universities—were concerned. Certainly, important exceptions existed, not least of all the robust, long-standing photography program at the Museum of Modern Art, directed from 1962 to 1991 by curator John Szarkowski.¹⁵¹ That photography had its own rich history, that it had been used for over a

¹⁵¹ Beaumont Newhall’s tenure as photography curator at MoMA (1940–1947) was followed by that of Edward Steichen (1947–1961), who was in turn succeeded by Szarkowski. A handful of other major American institutions were collecting and exhibiting photography in the 1960s, including the George Eastman House in Rochester, New York, and, to an extent, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, but MoMA’s program under Szarkowski was far and away the most influential. On the origins of MoMA’s photography department, as well as Szarkowski’s later influence in particular, see McDonald, “Centralizing Rochester;” O’Toole, “No Democracy in Quality”; Phillips, “The Judgment Seat of Photography”; Abigail Solomon-Godeau, “Mandarin Modernism: Photography until Now,” *Art in America* 78, no. 12 (December 1990): 140–83; among many other sources.

century not only for pragmatic but for expressive ends—none of this was a secret, and yet it remained obscure to the culture at large. And, significantly, even a cursory glance at the history of photography galleries in the United States, littered with thwarted ambitions and financial struggle, is enough to drive home the point that a *market* for photographs had not yet been established.¹⁵²

As this situation began to shift in the 1960s, and became a genuine sea change in the following decade, much of the work of gallerists, curators, and writers hinged on excavating the medium's history and presenting it to the public. This was especially evident in the discovery or re-assessment of photographers whose work had long lain neglected or forgotten, and their subsequent celebration in exhibitions and publications, as well as gallery and auction sales.¹⁵³ Significantly, this new attention focused on a wide array of practitioners, living and dead, famous and obscure, and included both those who worked in artistic milieux and those whose careers had been made in a host of other professional, even vernacular, realms. A list of photographers whose reputations were “made” during the 1960s and 1970s would be far too unwieldy to outline here. A particularly celebrated example, to choose just one, is the French street photographer Eugène Atget. The Paris-based American photographer Man Ray was an early, if fickle, supporter of Atget's work, admiring it primarily in the context of his own interest in Surrealism. American photographer Berenice Abbott and dealer Julien Levy, who learned of

¹⁵² The first half of the twentieth century saw a handful of now-celebrated American galleries specializing in photography, but none were especially successful from a financial perspective. Their scant numbers also stand in stark contrast to the enormous wave of galleries that followed.

¹⁵³ In terms of publications, Beaumont Newhall's *History of Photography* remained for decades one of the few, and certainly the most definitive, published histories in English. Newhall, *The History of Photography*, 1949. It was not until the 1960s and 1970s that additional historical surveys began slowly to appear, along with publications such as Nathan Lyons's *Photographers on Photography*, which emphasized that photographers themselves had long written fluently and self-reflexively about their own medium. Nathan Lyons, *Photographers on Photography; a Critical Anthology*, Prentice-Hall Foundations of Modern Photography Series (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966).

Atget's work through Man Ray, were much more assiduous in their interest. After Atget's death in 1927, Abbott purchased the contents of his studio, brought them back to New York, and enjoined Levy to assist in promoting the work through publications—including a limited edition portfolio of prints made by Abbott from Atget's negatives—and exhibitions.¹⁵⁴ Despite Abbott and Levy's protracted efforts, it was not until 1968 that Atget's voluminous archive was purchased by the Museum of Modern Art, under the purview of John Szarkowski. In the decades since, Atget's work has generated a prodigious and sometimes contentious body of writing from numerous authors, along with many exhibitions and lucrative sales.¹⁵⁵ The (re-)discovery of early photographers under the auspices of the market and the museum helped to establish and populate a coherent history for the medium, and provided an impetus for preserving otherwise ephemeral material. It also became a flashpoint for scholars who fundamentally objected to the notion of centering photography's history on a sanctified canon of exceptional individuals.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Peter Barberie et al., *Looking at Atget* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, in association with Yale University Press, 2005), 1–2, 53. Barberie's essay offers a detailed overview of Abbott and Levy's efforts to promote Atget's work. Levy's personal collection of photographs was distributed to both institutional and private collections after his death, and a large portion of it, including 361 prints by Atget, came to the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 2001.

¹⁵⁵ To cite just a small sample of publications, all of them posthumous, on Atget's work, see Berenice Abbott, "Eugene Atget," *Creative Arts* 5, no. 2 (September 1929): 651–56; *The World of Atget* (New York: Horizon Press, 1964); David Travis, *Photographs from the Julien Levy Collection Starting with Atget* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1976); Maria Morris, "Eugène Atget, 1857–1927: The Structure of the Work" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1980); John Szarkowski and Maria Morris Hambourg, *The Work of Atget*, 4 vols. (New York: Boston: Museum of Modern Art; Distributed by New York Graphic Society, 1981–1985); Molly Nesbit, *Atget's Seven Albums*, Yale Publications in the History of Art (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). It is worth noting that Hambourg and Szarkowski's landmark Atget retrospective at MoMA was published in four volumes, each accompanied by an exhibition: *Old France* (1981); *The Art of Old Paris* (1982); *The Ancien Regime* (1983); and *Modern Times* (1985). It also spurred concurrent gallery exhibitions and a major auction of the photographer's work at around the same time. See Edwynn Houk Gallery, *Atget's Vision: An Exhibition of Vintage Photographs by Eugène Atget*, September 12–October 31, 1981 (Chicago: Edwynn Houk Gallery, 1981); Sotheby's, *Photographs by Eugène Atget* (New York: Sotheby Park-Bernet, Inc., May 24, 1982).

¹⁵⁶ Notable examples of this line of critique include Rosalind Krauss, "Photography's Discursive Spaces: Landscape/View," *Art Journal* 42, no. 4 (Winter 1982): 311–19; Christopher Phillips, "A Mnemonic Art? Calotype Aesthetics at Princeton," *October* 26 (1983): 34–62; Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Calotypomania: The Gourmet Guide to Nineteenth-Century Photography," *Afterimage* 11, no. 1–2

This project of historical recovery is one way in which the mechanisms of the photo boom differed from the print revival, and yet many of the other elements are remarkably similar. There was a recognized need to contextualize photographs as collectible objects, and to set up a semantic infrastructure for understanding them as such. I would also argue that photography dealers were courting a public that had been very recently inculcated in the vocabularies and practices set out by the Print Council of America. Despite the fact that these standards were already showing their age, there was a general acceptance of many of their basic tenets. Even multiples and photomechanical prints that seemed to fly in the face of the Council's prescriptions largely hewed to basic practices of editioning, for example. Dealers as a whole were expected—and often required by law—to be exceptionally conscientious about how they represented their wares. Further, although the photo boom was characterized by a proliferation of medium-specific institutions dedicated exclusively to photography, it is also important to recognize how porous these boundaries could be. A number of photography dealers, for example, including Harry Lunn in Washington, DC, got their start as purveyors of fine prints. And many art galleries during this period began to include photography in their existing rosters. Robert Schoelkopf was one of the earliest, first showing photography in 1965,¹⁵⁷ but also of note were such major players as

(Summer 1983): 7–12; “Canon Fodder: Authoring Eugene Atget,” *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 16, no. 6 (January–February 1986): 221–27. Solomon-Godeau's dissection of the existing literature on Atget prompted a response from John Szarkowski in a subsequent issue of *The Print Collector's Newsletter*, to which she then followed up in the next but one. See John Szarkowski, “To the Editors,” *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 17, no. 2 (May–June 1986): 56–57; Abigail Solomon-Godeau, “To the Editors,” *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 17, no. 3 (July–August 1986): 93

¹⁵⁷ “Robert Schoelkopf Gallery Records · SOVA,” accessed December 17, 2019, <https://sova.si.edu/record/AAA.robeschg>.

Marlborough Fine Art,¹⁵⁸ Castelli Graphics,¹⁵⁹ Zabriskie Gallery,¹⁶⁰ and many others. Thus the photo boom did not emerge into a vacuum. Rather, the language and the strategies adopted by dealers leaned heavily on existing structures, particularly those so recently established by the print revival. They also, it should be said, drew significantly from the preceding generations of photographic practitioners and advocates. Despite the fact that in photography as much as in prints, major conceptual and aesthetic shifts were afoot in the 1960s and 70s, much of the initial rhetoric around collectible photographs harkened back to the modernist values of Alfred Stieglitz, Ansel Adams, and Nancy and Beaumont Newhall.

This relationship to the print market is what *The Print Collector's Newsletter* recognized to an extent that few others did. Its perceptiveness in this regard was due at least in part to Jacqueline Brody's interest in photography, although its initial forays into the medium preceded her tenure. In addition, the *PCN* office's physical proximity to some of the most important new photography galleries in New York afforded an important point of access.¹⁶¹ *PCN* was also, of course, a publication specifically aimed at collectors. In this context it is useful to recall that the practice of collecting art, and specifically prints, had been recently embraced by a much wider swath of the public than in previous generations. The same proved true of photography.

Although there quickly emerged an elite cadre of wealthy photograph collectors, including such

¹⁵⁸ Marlborough's first photography exhibition was "Richard Avedon, Photographer," organized at its New York gallery by Paul Katz in 1975. See Audrey Sands, "Photography at Marlborough Gallery," in *Bill Brandt / Henry Moore* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020), 114–15.

¹⁵⁹ In 1971, Lewis Baltz became the first photographer to be represented by Castelli. Emilia Mickevicius, "New Topographics and the Reinvention of American Landscape Photography, 1975" (PhD diss., Brown University, 2019).

¹⁶⁰ The New York gallery opened its Paris location, dedicated to photography, in 1977. "News of the Print World: People & Places," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 8, no. 1 (March–April 1977): 15.

¹⁶¹ Most significantly, *PCN* was located around the corner from LIGHT Gallery, the ground-breaking contemporary photography gallery that opened in 1971 under the directorship of Harold Jones and the financial backing of Tennyson Schad.

notables as Sam Wagstaff and Arnold Crane, much of the medium's appeal was its accessibility and affordability.¹⁶² The author of a 1976 article in the *U.S. News & World Report* makes this point explicitly. Photography "is still comparatively cheap," they write, pointing out that "until 1973, the highest price ever paid at an auction for a single photograph was \$9,250 for a daguerreotype portrait of Edgar Allen Poe."¹⁶³ By contrast, "etchings by Rembrandt or Picasso fetch prices ranging from \$10,000 to \$50,000, while fine paintings by acknowledged masters sometimes sell in the millions."¹⁶⁴ Photography's affordability was thus widely touted in the popular press, along with articles and eventually full-length books that purported to guide new collectors on their photographic journey.¹⁶⁵ This wave of printed resources didn't really crest until the mid- and late-1970s, however, and in the meantime *The Print Collector's Newsletter* was instrumental in addressing this particular need.

Photographic Content in *The Print Collector's Newsletter*

As editor of *The Print Collector's Newsletter*, Jacqueline Brody's commitment to photography was leavened throughout the pages of the magazine. *PCN's* review sections, which comprised a significant part of its content, were peppered with growing numbers of photography exhibitions, publications, and events. In addition to the many short, unsigned reviews, Brody commissioned

¹⁶² Mull, "Investors in the Camera Masterpieces." It should be noted that while Wagstaff and Crane were two especially well-known private collectors in the United States, both of whose collections ultimately formed the basis of the photography department at the J. Paul Getty Museum, there was also a well-documented rise in *corporate* collections of photography during this period. Many of these entered public institutions as well. The Gilman Paper Company collection, curated by Pierre Apraxine between approximately 1977 and 1997 and now housed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, is just one example.

¹⁶³ Jacob Deschin, "Viewpoint: Reputed \$35,000 Sale of Daguerreotype Signals Sharp Rise in Collector Values," *Popular Photography*, February 1974, 32, 34, 132.

¹⁶⁴ "Investing in Photographs," *U.S. News & World Report*, May 24, 1976: n.p. See also "The Photo Boom," *Time*, September 3, 1979, 43.

¹⁶⁵ I will be addressing this in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

luminaries of the burgeoning photography scene, as well as art and print scholars, to write longer articles on a host of topics. Some of these took important new books or exhibitions as their starting point, while others were stand-alone expositions on photography's history, its contemporary practice, and its new significance in the marketplace.

One frequent contributor was the art critic and poet Carter Ratcliff, whom Brody often solicited to write on topics she deemed especially exciting.¹⁶⁶ During *PCN*'s first decade, these included the photographers Duane Michals, Josef Sudek, and Richard Misrach (the latter two articles were featured on the magazine's cover [Figure 9, Figure 10]) and a meditation on photographers' use of white in their compositions.¹⁶⁷ Other writers included curators Clifford Ackley, Beaumont Newhall (whose translation of Alfred Stieglitz I have already discussed), Peter Bunnell, Anita Mozley, Charles Millard, and Suzanne Boorsch; art historians Daniela Palazzoli, Eugenia Parry Janis, Ulrich Keller, and William Innes Homer; collector and philanthropist Joyce Menschel; artist Agnes Denes; and photographer Naomi Savage.¹⁶⁸ Brody

¹⁶⁶ Jacqueline Brody, conversation with the author, June 4, 2019.

¹⁶⁷ Carter Ratcliff, "Duane Michals," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 6, no. 4 (September–October 1975): 93–96; "Gray Areas: The Photographer's Use of White," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 8, no. 1 (March–April 1977): 7–20; "Josef Sudek: Photographs," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 8, no. 4 (September–October 1977): 93–95; "Richard Misrach: Words and Images," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 10, no. 6 (January–February 1980): 181–84.

¹⁶⁸ A partial list of their respective contributions includes Clifford S. Ackley, review of *Review of Looking at Photographs: 100 Pictures from the Collection of The Museum of Modern Art*, by John Szarkowski, *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 4, no. 5 (November–December 1973): 113–14; Alfred Stieglitz, "The Collector & Fine Prints;" Peter C. Bunnell, "Observations on Collecting Photographs," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 2, no. 2 (May–June 1971): 28–30; Anita V. Mozley, review of *Review of Eadweard Muybridge: The Father of the Motion Picture*, by Gordon Hendricks, *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 6, no. 4 (1975): 111–13; Charles W. Millard, "A Look at Edward Weston," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 6, no. 3 (July–August 1975): 68–70; Suzanne Boorsch, "Photography: Where We Are," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 9, no. 2 (May–June 1978): 39–40; Daniela Palazzoli, "Description of a Battle: The Image," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 5, no. 4 (September–October 1974): 77–82; Eugenia Parry Janis, review of *Review of Victorian Studio Photographs from the Collections of Studio Bassano and Elliott & Fry*, London, et al., *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 9, no. 2 (May–June 1978): 56–60; Ulrich Keller, review of *Review of August Sander Rheinlandschaften*, by Wolfgang Kemp, *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 6, no. 6 (January–February 1976): 169–71; William Innes Homer, "On the Connoisseurship of Photographs;" Joyce Menschel, "Photographic Collecting: Symposium," *The Print*

herself periodically contributed lengthy interviews, speaking for example with collectors Patti and Frank Kolodny (identified in *PCN* as Patti and Frank K) and photographer Harry Callahan.¹⁶⁹

In this list of contributors, there is a certain slippage, characteristic of the gradual emergence of photography's significance in the larger art scene at this time. Most of these individuals were not trained or even employed as experts in photography, yet several of them have become critically important to its written history, far beyond their contributions to the *Print Collector's Newsletter*. Indeed, this point was made in the magazine's own pages, in a note on the 1975 *The Art History of Photography: Recent Investigations* symposium organized by Robert Sobieszek at George Eastman House.¹⁷⁰ Among the speakers were William Innes Homer (who presented on Paul Strand), Anita Mozley (on Thomas Annan), Eugenia Parry Janis (on Henri Le Secq), and Ulrich Keller (on August Sander and *The Family of Man*), none of whom, the author points out, came from photography backgrounds. The exception at the event was Peter Bunnell, "surely the youngest eminence grise in art history," about whom I will shortly have much more to say. Meanwhile, "Princeton and the University of New Mexico," the author concludes, "are still the two places to go for formal graduate study in the history of photography, but if the Eastman House symposium is symptomatic, they won't be alone for long."¹⁷¹ This entrance of

Collector's Newsletter 9, no. 6 (January–February 1979): 189; Agnes Denes, review of *Review of Julia Margaret Cameron: Her Life and Photographic Work*, et al., *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 6, no. 6 (January–February 1976): 171–72; Naomi Savage, "Images of Man Ray," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 5, no. 5 (November–December 1974): 114–114.

¹⁶⁹ Jacqueline Brody, "Photography: A Personal Collection," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 7, no. 2 (May–June 1976): 37–44; Jacqueline Brody, "Harry Callahan: Questions," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 7, no. 6 (January–February 1977): 171–77. Brody confirmed the Kolodnys' identity during our conversation in June 2019.

¹⁷⁰ "News of the Print World: People & Places," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 6, no. 2 (May–June 1975): 41.

¹⁷¹ "News of the Print World," 41.

photography as a worthy topic of study within the larger context of art and printmaking is on full display in *The Print Collector's Newsletter*, as its list of contributors makes plain. Prior to the 1970s, there were few places where one could study photography, either its practice or its history. Thus many individuals who began writing about it—or even curating or selling it—at this time came from an array of different contexts, and brought to it their respective biases and perspectives. *PCN* seems especially to have embraced this cross-over, inviting the same authors to cover a variety of topics, both photographic and print-related.¹⁷²

The newsletter was also singular in its treatment of photographs as collectibles and its attention to the market. In addition to articles on the history and practice of photography, by the mid-1970s *PCN* covered such topics as the collection, conservation, appraisal, and connoisseurship of photographs, as well as regulations on their sale in galleries.¹⁷³ Again, in some of these instances, the focus was on photography specifically; in others, it was treated as part of a larger class of works on paper. This attention to photography's commercial aspects set *PCN* apart early on, and was bolstered by the rigorousness with which it included photography in

¹⁷² See for example Carter Ratcliff, "Dorothea Rockburne: New Prints," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 5, no. 2 (May–June 1974): 30–32; Eugenia Parry Janis, Review of *Impressionist Prints*, et al., *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 6, no. 3 (July–August 1975): 79–81; Suzanne Boorsch, "Rubens in Prints," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 8, no. 2 (May–June 1977): 36–36; Clifford S. Ackley, "Rembrandt's 'Christ Appearing to the Apostles,'" *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 8, no. 1 (March–April 1977): 6–7. See also Janis's review of Estelle Jussim's *Visual Communications and the Graphic Arts: Photographic Technologies in the Nineteenth Century*, which neatly exemplifies the blurred line between print and photography concerns at this time. Eugenia Parry Janis, "A Media Massage—Updating Ivins," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 7, no. 2 (May–June 1976): 56–59.

¹⁷³ Bunnell, "Observations on Collecting Photographs" and Homer, "On the Connoisseurship of Photographs," cited earlier. See also Miles Barth, "Notes on Conservation & Restoration of Photographs," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 7, no. 2 (May–June 1976): 48–51; Katherine Schwarz, "Appraising Prints & Photographs," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 8, no. 3 (July–August 1977): 71–75; Gerrit Henry, "The Dealers React," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 12, no. 5 (November–December 1981): 142–43. The last of these is a survey of both print and photography dealers about the passage of the New York print and photograph law, a late outgrowth of the activities of the Print Council of America. See also Gilbert S. Edelson, "A Guide to the New York Print & Photograph Law," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 12, no. 5 (November–December 1981): 140–42, in the same issue.

its coverage of auctions, dealer catalogues, and newly available editions and portfolios. In all of these contexts, what also stands out is the fact that *PCN* consistently treated photographs as physical objects, not simply as a class of image.

Peter Bunnell in *PCN*

The appearance of photographic topics in *The Print Collector's Newsletter* picked up steam as the photo boom got underway, with the number of photography-related articles truly blossoming around the middle of the decade. But its first few years were significant as well, perhaps even more so given the paucity of resources about photography elsewhere. The first article explicitly about photography to appear in the pages of *PCN* was curator, scholar, and educator Peter Bunnell's "Observations on Collecting Photographs."¹⁷⁴ It was published in 1971, while Bunnell was still a curator at the Museum of Modern Art.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, it is one of the era's earliest texts about collecting photography,¹⁷⁶ while the very earliest seems to be Bunnell's own, similar, piece published in *Art in America* three years earlier.¹⁷⁷ Two emphases in the *PCN* article are worth highlighting here. One is the suggestion that, despite the growing interest in photography, collectors and curators remain cautious about and even suspicious of the medium. Bunnell attributes this in part to a lack of existing scholarship, exacerbated by the failure of universities

¹⁷⁴ Peter C. Bunnell, "Observations on Collecting Photographs."

¹⁷⁵ Bunnell served as curator under John Szarkowski from 1968–1972. From there, he moved on to become the inaugural David Hunter McAlpin Professor of the History of Photography and Modern Art at Princeton University, the first such position in the United States.

¹⁷⁶ See also Pearl Korn, "Collecting for Fun and Profit," *Camera* 35, December 1971, 52–62; and Jane Dreyfuss, "The Business of Collecting," *Modern Photography Annual '71*, 1971, 11–12, 14, 16, 18.

¹⁷⁷ Peter C. Bunnell, "Photographs for Collectors," *Art in America* 56, no. 1 (February 1968): 70–75. This article seems to have been striking enough to warrant a notice in *The New York Times*. See Jacob Deschin, "On Collecting," *The New York Times*, February 4, 1968. Bunnell also repurposed parts of "Photographs for Collectors" for a 1974 article on the photography collection at the National Gallery of Canada. See Peter C. Bunnell, "The National Gallery Photographic Collection: A Vital Resource," *Artscanada* 31, no. 3–4 (December 1974): 37–44.

to support would-be photography scholars, “not necessarily as specialists but as informed members of the arts community.”¹⁷⁸ For Bunnell, collecting is thus inherently bound up with a nuanced understanding of photography’s history and its participation in a larger art historical discourse. His second crucial point is an insistence on the materiality of photographs, and specifically *original* photographs. “Quality in photography,” he writes, “rests with the works themselves and to collect photographs is to become conscious of a certain kind of object. The essence of a photographer’s conception is realized only in the original photographic print. Similarly, the unique qualities of the photographic medium may only be found there as well.”¹⁷⁹ In this way, Bunnell explicitly makes a case for photography as not simply a means of reproduction, but as a medium of originals.

He also writes about the question of photographic *quantity*, addressing from another angle the conception that photographs are infinitely and identically duplicatable. Bunnell points out that, with regard to art photographs in particular, “in actual practice this capacity for unlimitedness is not pursued, and a study of the more recent history of photography clearly proves that most photographs would be described as rare.”¹⁸⁰ For one thing, he says, most photographers are simply more interested in creating new images than spending time in the darkroom. Nonetheless, he admits, “Unless the negative is destroyed, the potential to have additional prints made will always exist.”¹⁸¹ But in addition to numerical scarcity, Bunnell also underscores the variability of photographic prints, stressing the “printmaking aspect” of darkroom work, the multitude of processes, and inevitable shifts in available materials. Although later prints may, hypothetically, be made from surviving negatives, the resulting prints will look

¹⁷⁸ Bunnell, “Observations on Collecting Photographs,” 28.

¹⁷⁹ Bunnell, 28.

¹⁸⁰ Bunnell, 29.

¹⁸¹ Bunnell, 29.

entirely different from those made at the time the picture was taken. Again, Bunnell is working here to allay collectors' qualms that photographs are merely endless and identical reproductions, and to cultivate a sense of them as quite as autographic and finite in number as more traditional prints.

During the same period that Bunnell wrote his articles on collecting, he also curated two groundbreaking exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art: *Photography as Printmaking* (1968) and *Photography Into Sculpture* (1970).¹⁸² These exhibitions pushed the object-ness of photography to its logical extreme, showcasing a range of experimental practices—both historical and contemporary—that moved far beyond the straight photographic print. In fact, Bunnell rejected the easy dichotomy between “straight” and “experimental” prints. In MoMA's press release for *Photography As Printmaking*, he insisted that “the premise of this exhibition is that such concepts [as straight, experimental, and creative] are outdated and restrictive if not false in light of the sophisticated directions of photographic activity today.”¹⁸³ In the years between 1968 and 1971, Bunnell published a handful of articles that further laid out in detail his thinking about these exhibitions.¹⁸⁴ It seems clear that, during this period, he was devoted to highlighting the expressive synthesis between photographic imagery and the physical qualities of original photographs, in whatever form they appeared. His concern with the photographic print, he wrote, “in no way depreciates the importance of the optical image. Rather, this concern extends the image and in addition recognizes the photographer's creative objective in the

¹⁸² See Mary Statzer, *The Photographic Object 1970*.

¹⁸³ Peter C. Bunnell, “Photography as Printmaking,” Museum of Modern Art press release no. 24, March 19, 1968, 2.

¹⁸⁴ Peter C. Bunnell, “Photographs as Sculpture and Prints,” *Art in America* 57, no. 5 (October 1969): 56–61; Peter C. Bunnell, “Photography as Printmaking,” in *Artist's Proof*, vol. IX (New York: Pratt Graphics Institute, 1969): 24–40; Peter C. Bunnell, “Photography Into Sculpture,” *Arts in Virginia*, no. 11 (Spring 1971): 18–25.

execution of an artifact.”¹⁸⁵ Although Bunnell might not have put it this way himself, I would further suggest that his writing on collecting may be counted as part of the same project, undertaken for different but related aims. In these texts, Bunnell demonstrates that photography comprises a host of divergent practices, and establishes photographs as singular objects, expressive and even autographic in their own way. In the wake of the print revival, his emphasis is obviously far from arbitrary. Rather, it is an attempt to distance photographs from an over-identification with their mechanical, reproductive qualities, and to understand them as *originals*.

What is also important to stress here is that Bunnell himself was trained as a photographer, having spent four years studying photography at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), as well as working closely with both Minor White and Ansel Adams.¹⁸⁶ As noted earlier, given the lack of “History of Photography” as an existing academic field, most photography scholars and curators at this time came from a variety of other backgrounds. And many of the key instigators of the early photo boom were, in fact, photographers.¹⁸⁷ Their appreciation for the medium was intrinsically bound up with their experience as practitioners, with their familiarity with and interest in, to paraphrase Bunnell, “how you make one of these things.”¹⁸⁸ In other words, they were conversant with the materials and technologies and

¹⁸⁵ Bunnell, “Photography as Printmaking,” *Artist’s Proof*, 24.

¹⁸⁶ Bunnell was emphatic about this aspect of his background when we spoke in July 2019.

¹⁸⁷ Even the most casual survey of photography professionals of this era illustrates this point. In addition to Bunnell, both John Szarkowski and his MoMA predecessor Edward Steichen were photographers. Dealers Harold Jones of LIGHT Gallery (later the first director of the Center for Creative Photography and founding professor of the MFA program in photography at the University of Arizona) and Lee Witkin, in different capacities, were photographers first. Many of the most influential teachers, writers, and administrators of the era were photographers too, including Beaumont Newhall (MoMA, George Eastman House, University of New Mexico), Henry Holmes Smith (Indiana University), Van Deren Coke (University of New Mexico, George Eastman House, SFMOMA), Thomas Barrow (George Eastman House, University of New Mexico), Minor White (California School of Fine Arts, Rochester Institute of Technology, MIT), Ansel Adams (California School of Fine Arts), Nathan Lyons (George Eastman House, Visual Studies Workshop), Harry Callahan (Institute of Design, Rhode Island School of Design), Aaron Siskind (Institute of Design, Rhode Island School of Design), and many more.

¹⁸⁸ Peter Bunnell, conversation with the author, July 2, 2019.

processes of photography, and this in turn shaped how they understood the medium's history and its overall significance. For the majority of these dealers, curators, writers, and teachers, photography was always more than imagery or reproduction; it was about the process of creating objects. This was significantly *less* true of the subsequent generation of scholars who, in the 1980s, took umbrage with the "museumization" of photography and whose discussion of photography tended to be much more theoretical, sometimes at the expense of photography's physical characteristics. In John Szarkowski's response to Abigail Solomon-Godeau's critical article on the recent scholarship on Eugène Atget, both published in the pages of *PCN* in 1986, for example, he suggests that she has written "a very long review, if that is the appropriate word, without considering, or even describing, the work in view." Solomon-Godeau's subsequent rejoinder agrees with but essentially dismisses this charge, noting "As regards the accusation that I did not consider, or even review, Atget's photographs per se, it was not my intention to do so."¹⁸⁹ Her point is that her article was not in fact about Atget's photography, but about "the values, beliefs, and investments that inform the institutional and discursive presentation of Atget."¹⁹⁰

Photographs & Professionals

Bunnell remained a regular contributor to *PCN* for more than a decade, writing an assortment of articles and exhibition reviews.¹⁹¹ Perhaps most notably, he moderated a fascinating series of

¹⁸⁹ Szarkowski, "To the Editors," 57; Solomon-Godeau, "To the Editors," 93.

¹⁹⁰ Solomon-Godeau, 93.

¹⁹¹ For example, Peter C. Bunnell, "Diane Arbus," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 3, no. 6 (January–February 1973): 128–30; "Review of *Alfred Stieglitz: An American Seer* and *Camera Work: A Critical Anthology*," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 5, no. 4 (September–October 1974): 95–96; "Photography in America: Can There Ever Again Be a History of Photography?," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 5, no. 6 (January–February 1975): 144–45; "Ray Metzker," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 9, no. 6

four published round-table conversations, convened every five years between 1973 and 1988.¹⁹²

The first three of these included, in addition to Bunnell, photography dealers Lee Witkin and Harold Jones, photographer Aaron Siskind, art dealer Ronald Feldman, and fine print and book dealer Lucien Goldschmidt.¹⁹³ [Figure 11] In these conversations, published under the series title “Photographs & Professionals,” this group of experts from the worlds of photography, contemporary art, and fine prints discuss the challenges posed by photography’s entry into the art market.

Across these conversations recurs the question of standards, of how photographs are to be explained to an eager but generally unschooled public, how they might be classified and evaluated. The first conversation, in 1973, opens immediately with Goldschmidt’s assertion that, given the recent popularity of modern, editioned prints such as those published by Tatyana Grosman, “it seems natural to buy and sell photographs.”¹⁹⁴ A moment later, Feldman continues,

The issue really is, now that photography is becoming commercially successful, how will we as professionals in the art world treat it and understand it and sell it? And what standards will apply? Will they be the same as in the print world and should they be?¹⁹⁵

Thus it seems given, among the participants, that photography will borrow certain conventions from the print market, although they also enumerate—and disagree on—ways in which the two are necessarily distinct. They discuss practices such as the production of numbered editions and

(January–February 1979): 177–79; “Stieglitziana,” *The Print Collector’s Newsletter* 14, no. 5 (November–December 1983): 178–82.

¹⁹² Peter C. Bunnell et al., “Photographs & Professionals: A Discussion,” 54–60; “Photographs & Professionals: Same Time, Five Years,” *The Print Collector’s Newsletter* 9, no. 3 (July–August 1978): 78–86; “Photographs & Professionals III,” *The Print Collector’s Newsletter* 14, no. 3 (July–August 1983): 82–91; “Photographs & Professionals IV,” *The Print Collector’s Newsletter* 19, no. 3 (July–August 1988): 81–91.

¹⁹³ The final iteration, in 1988, featured an entirely different group, aside from Bunnell, and exemplified some of the major shifts afoot in both art and photography by that time. I will return to this last panel in Chapter Two.

¹⁹⁴ Bunnell et al., “Photographs & Professionals: A Discussion,” 54.

¹⁹⁵ Bunnell et al., 54.

portfolios—commonplace in printmaking, but, at the time of the first conversation, still relatively unusual for photography. They also touch on the significance of what would become known as “vintage” prints, made by the photographer’s own hand at approximately the same time as the negative. I will examine in subsequent chapters how these practices and terms ultimately became ingrained in the market for photography, and I will continue to refer back to these conversations in *The Print Collector’s Newsletter*. The roundtables offer a singularly illuminating view of these ideas in flux, as they were being hashed out and debated over a number of years, while the market grew and changed. They demonstrate the strategies by which dealers in particular found ways to create an aura of both desirability and legitimacy for photographs by adopting some of the conventions of the print world, while also becoming entangled in some of the same debates about originality, multiplicity, and value.

One important point of both confluence and divergence is the question of the artist’s hand, the autographic quality of a work, which, as we have seen, was a central concern for both prints and multiples. By the 1970s, there was a growing acceptance of both collaborative printmaking and industrially produced multiples. Nonetheless, we see in the early “Photographs & Professionals” conversations a certain amount of anxiety about whether a photographer must print their own work, and whether an early print is more valuable than a later one. I will explore this in greater detail in my discussion of vintage prints, but it is worth noting that the rules established by the print world did not translate seamlessly to photography, nor was there consensus about the answers. In the 1973 discussion, for example, Lee Witkin opines that

The most desirable original print, in my definition, is one that’s made by the photographer from the original negative. But it’s also an original print if it’s made from the negative by someone other than the photographer. In most instances, it’s usually signed as such. I don’t see why people should be confused about a negative that’s printed

by the photographer, his estate, or someone else, if it's listed as such. There's an obvious difference in collectability and in price structure.¹⁹⁶

Yet, when Witkin later asks Aaron Siskind whether he feels that prints he makes himself are more meaningful than the outsourced prints in a recent portfolio, Siskind replies, "No. I can't tell the difference, so what's the point?"¹⁹⁷ (I will be returning to this portfolio, published by Harry Abrams, in Chapter Four.) Witkin's comment here also belies the fact that, indeed, these differences were anything but obvious. The ability to distinguish between an early photograph and a later one, or a photograph printed by the photographer or by someone else, was largely a matter of connoisseurship. New collectors could not necessarily be expected to make these distinctions without considerable guidance. Indeed, the notion that there even *was* a distinction to be made, that one type of print might be more valuable than another of the same image, was just beginning to emerge.

Given their relative informality, these conversations offer remarkable insight into the thought processes of key individuals grappling with a new economic and intellectual landscape for photography. They also provide a valuable resource for understanding the evolution of the photography market from our current vantage point. Over the years, the audience for photography grew exponentially, as did the numbers of galleries eager to profit from this expansion. And while in some ways the level of knowledge and sophistication rose accordingly, so too did a growing commercialism that discomfited some of the early dealers who had entered the market in a spirit of adventure and advocacy for the medium. The precedent of the print revival laid the groundwork for an appreciation for multiple forms of art, but also a certain rigidity of expectation that photographers and dealers were not initially prepared for. One sees in

¹⁹⁶ Bunnell et al., "Photographs & Professionals: A Discussion," 56. Witkin himself published a number of limited edition portfolios, some of them posthumous, throughout the 1970s.

¹⁹⁷ Bunnell et al., 60.

these conversations a tension between the various desires to promote photographs as collectibles, to legitimize their status as multiples, to meet consumer expectations, and also to define for photography a distinct history and set of working practices. There is, perhaps, in the earliest conversations, a certain idealism as well, a resistance to fully adopting the strictures of the print market—for example the practice of cancelling or destroying a print matrix, in this case a negative. The interplay between rarity and reproducibility is one that I will continue to investigate throughout this dissertation.

CHAPTER TWO: THE UNEXPLAINABLE MAGIC OF PRESENCE

In 1971, Beaumont Newhall and Van Deren Coke wrote a joint editorial in the June issue of George Eastman House's *Image* journal.¹⁹⁸ In it, they presciently outlined many of what would become the key issues of the nascent market for photographs. In addition to noting the already apparent rise of limited edition photography portfolios, they discuss the importance of distinguishing between original photographic prints and “copy prints”—that is, prints made from second-generation negatives. Selling copy prints, they write,

cannot but confuse the public and lead to a misunderstanding of print quality. Worse, it could well lead to the total collapse of values. It is essential, if fine photographs are to be collected in ways comparable to etchings and lithographs, that a distinction be made between a print from an original negative and those made from copy negatives. It should be borne in mind a modern copy of a nineteenth century photograph cannot mirror the true appearance of an albumen print even if the contemporary print is made with the greatest care and toned to take on the color of vintage prints.¹⁹⁹

It is striking here that Newhall and Coke are explicitly looking to the print market as a model for creating value for photographs, and using essentially the same language to distinguish between originals and reproductions that proliferated during the earlier print renaissance. But I would also like to underscore a particular word that the authors use at the end of this passage: *vintage*.

Today, the term *vintage*, and specifically *vintage print*, has become so ubiquitous in the photography world as to appear self-evident, and yet it is a concept that only first emerged in the 1970s. As such, it is especially revealing about both the values and the contradictions of the photography market at that time. And yet, perhaps because of its current ubiquity, it is a concept that has rarely been examined critically, and remains almost entirely absent from academic

¹⁹⁸ Newhall and Coke were then Director and Deputy Director, respectively, of George Eastman House. Newhall retired from GEH that year, and Coke succeeded him as Director.

¹⁹⁹ Beaumont Newhall and Van Deren Coke, “Editorial,” *Image* 14, no. 3 (June 1971): 1.

discussion.²⁰⁰ Despite this omission, it is crucial to understand how the photography market came to emphasize vintage photographs to the exclusion of most of the medium's other forms and formats. *Vintage* underscores what the market—and by extension the field of photography—values both literally and figuratively, and has been a powerful determinant of what kinds of photographs are studied and preserved. Far from emerging spontaneously as an *a priori* fact of life, the valence of *vintage* evolved over time, and was extensively and publicly remarked upon.

At the outset of the 1970s, *The Print Collector's Newsletter* was uniquely rigorous in its attention to the new market for photographs. Before long, however, it was joined by a rising tide of articles, special magazine features, and even full-length books dedicated to this increasingly significant and lucrative development. These articles and books, taken in the aggregate, represent an important window onto the concerns and anxieties that emerged during this period, and were often aimed at the photo-curious. But despite the major long-term influence of the photo boom on photography's place in American culture, little attention has been paid to newspaper and magazine articles, collecting guides, and dealer and auction catalogues which contain an extensive first-hand record of these early years of the modern photography market. A number of persistent themes emerge across these texts, offering insight into the origins of practices and vocabularies that we have come to take for granted. And among them is *vintage*. In this chapter I sketch a preliminary chronology of *vintage* and its early evolution as a photographic keyword, using these overlooked texts as the basis for my analysis. I examine the correlation between *vintage* and questions of originality, its place within a larger hierarchy of market value for photographs, and its persistent failure to account for much of photography's diversity and

²⁰⁰ The most notable exception is A. D. Coleman, whose astute discussions of *vintage* have significantly informed my own. See in particular A. D. Coleman, "Collecting Photographs, Part III," *Camera* 35 25, no. 5 (May 1980): 16, 18; "Photography as Material Culture: What Are the Vintage Years?," *Art on Paper* 5, no. 2 (December 2000): 56–60.

complexity. By doing so, I demonstrate this concept's importance in grounding a market for objects that had previously been treated as so much ephemera.

The notion of *vintage* may be understood as a solution to a basic but central problem: how to account for a reproducible medium in the context of an art market that sets a premium on originality and rarity. Specifically, *vintage* was and is a marketing strategy for historical photographic prints, keeping in mind that “historical” is always a shifting designation. Although this term has come to seem an inextricable part of the modern photography market, it is directly traceable to the 1970s. It emerged as part of the larger change in thinking about photographs as collectible objects, and in justifying them within a hierarchy of value. Such a hierarchy has not only shaped the market for photographs, but has exerted a strong influence on both the institutional collections and the published scholarship through which the history of the medium has been told, and its parameters set and contested. The relative insularity of the 1970s market for photographs also provoked, by the end of the decade, a forceful backlash against the medium's institutionalization. Perhaps as a result, the origins of ideas such as *vintage* have rarely been examined in their own right, or their fraught legacies given adequate contextualization. It is these lacunae that this chapter begins to address.

A Chronology of *Vintage*

As the Oxford English Dictionary attests, *vintage* is first and foremost a wine term, dating back to the fourteenth century and indicating the output of a vineyard in a particular year. One reads subsequently that it can more specifically refer to “the age or year of a particular wine,” especially “one of good or outstanding quality.”²⁰¹ Broader uses of the word are more recent: by

²⁰¹ Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “vintage,” accessed May 1, 2022, <https://www-oed->

the early decades of the twentieth century, *vintage* could refer simply to “the date or period at which a thing was made or produced,” or to “an old style or model of something, [especially] a vehicle.”²⁰² By this time it could also mean “characteristic of the best period of a person’s work.”²⁰³ In the context of photography, however, and specifically the photography market, *vintage* has assumed a more specific and yet more elusive meaning. Art historian Robin Lenman’s 2005 entry for *vintage print* in *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*²⁰⁴ puts it succinctly: “a market term, current since the 1970s, denoting a photographic print made by or under the supervision of the photographer within about five years of the negative’s creation.”²⁰⁵ As Lenman further points out, the term and its meaning are notoriously slippery, and fail to acknowledge a variety of contexts and practices relating to the production of photographic prints and their subsequent valuation. In addition, the specific implications of the term *vintage* have shifted significantly, particularly during the first several years of its use during the photo boom.

In addition to Newhall and Coke’s 1971 *Image* editorial, one of the earliest instances of *vintage* appears the same year in *The British Journal of Photography*, in an unsigned review of two recently published compendiums of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century photographs.²⁰⁶

com.ezproxy1.library.arizona.edu/

²⁰² Oxford English Dictionary, “vintage.”

²⁰³ Oxford English Dictionary, “vintage.”

²⁰⁴ Robin Lenman, “Vintage Print,” in *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), accessed July 23, 2020, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/>. Curiously, the only reference in the entry’s bibliography is Gerry Badger’s *Collecting Photography* (London: Mitchell Beazley, 2003).

²⁰⁵ This rather vague designation of “about five years” has not changed significantly over time. In addition to other examples that will be discussed throughout this chapter, see Peter H. Falk, *The Photographic Art Market* (New York: Falk-Leeds International, Inc, 1981); Gerry Badger, *Collecting Photography*, cited above; Sotheby’s, *The Quillan Collection of Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Photographs* (New York: Sotheby’s, 2008).

²⁰⁶ “Recent Books,” *The British Journal of Photography* 118, no. 5799 (September 10, 1971): 813. The two books under review were Gordon Winter, *A Country Camera 1844–1914* (Newton Abbot, UK: David & Charles, 1971); and C. S. Minto, *Victorian and Edwardian Scotland from Old Photographs* (New York: The Viking Press, 1970).

The introduction to the review begins by describing both books as “collections of vintage photographs,” and goes on to suggest that “a lesson driven home with considerable force by examination of these volumes is that time increases the value of photographs, to an extent which many would find surprising.”²⁰⁷ Importantly, the “increased value” to which the author refers is not monetary or even aesthetic, although these are vaguely hinted at. Rather, it is both the images’ “quaintness” and, especially, their function as repositories of “invaluable information” about years past.²⁰⁸ That said, the author ultimately emphasizes the importance of preserving historical negatives and photographs, and muses on the potential for discovering hitherto “unknown treasures.”²⁰⁹ But *vintage*, in this case, simply implies historical value. It should be pointed out as well that neither of the books under review use the word *vintage* themselves, tending simply to refer to the contents as “old photographs.” In fact, one of them explicitly indicates that the images are “reproduced from modern prints.”²¹⁰

Pioneering photography critics A. D. Coleman²¹¹ and Jacob Deschin²¹² were among the earliest public adopters of the term *vintage* in the United States. In fact, Deschin used the term as early as 1970, but in this instance it specifically referred to cameras rather than photographs per

²⁰⁷ “Recent Books,” 813.

²⁰⁸ “Recent Books,” 813.

²⁰⁹ “Recent Books,” 813.

²¹⁰ Minto, *Victorian and Edwardian Scotland*, n.p. This book, like so many others of the era—and even through the present day—reproduces the photographs without particular regard for the subtleties of the original object. All of the images are printed in uniform black and white, and cropped or enlarged seemingly at random, either to fit the book’s layout or to emphasize details in the image content. In some cases, the specific type of photograph, such as a daguerreotype, is mentioned in the caption, but the reproductions themselves do nothing to demonstrate such physical differences.

²¹¹ Coleman remains one of the most prolific and prominent American photography critics of the late twentieth century. During the period of the photo boom, he was a regular contributor to the *Village Voice*, *The New York Times*, *Popular Photography*, and *Camera 35*.

²¹² Jacob Deschin wrote a regular column, *Camera View*, for *The New York Times* from 1941 to 1970, and was a frequent contributor to *Popular Photography* starting in 1937 and ending shortly before his death in 1983. During the 1970s, he also published a newsletter called the *Photo Reporter*, and ran the gallery at Modernage, a New York-based photography printing lab.

se, and in this sense relates to more general uses of the word, meaning simply an older model or style.²¹³ More pertinent here are three articles from 1972, appearing in *The New York Times* and in the *Photography Annual*, which underscore the different shades of meaning that the word assumed at this point.²¹⁴ In a column from January 1972, Coleman uses *vintage* to specifically refer to the age of photographic images, not of the prints themselves. “Film and theater devotees,” he writes, “nostalgia freaks, and anyone interested in vintage photographs” will enjoy the exhibition of James Abbe photographs under review. The reader soon learns, however, that the prints on display are in fact brand new, “beautifully made” and “printed from the original negatives by Lexington Labs,” whose gallery is the site of the exhibition.²¹⁵ In a second article, published in November of the same year, the meaning of *vintage* has shifted somewhat. Coleman contrasts “eight vintage prints” by Alexander Gardner with the “all new prints made from the original glass negatives” that comprise the rest of the exhibition.²¹⁶ In this case, then, *vintage* refers to the age of the prints, not only of the images, although the review still concerns nineteenth-century photography; in other words, explicitly historical material. Importantly, part of this semantic shift has to do not only with the adjective *vintage* but with the noun that it modifies. Coleman’s first usage, as well as the word’s appearance in *The British Journal of Photography*, comprised the phrase “vintage photograph.” But again, in both of these instances there are clear indications that while the images are old, the photographic objects, the prints, are newly made. Meanwhile, in Coleman’s second article, the term is “vintage *print*,” and is used to distinguish nineteenth-century prints from ones more recently made. Thus the emphasis has

²¹³ Jacob Deschin, “Photography,” *The New York Times*, January 11, 1970.

²¹⁴ A. D. Coleman, “Pleasant Escape Into the Past,” *The New York Times*, January 30, 1972; “The Start of the Indian Question,” *The New York Times*, November 19, 1972; Jacob Deschin, “Print Collecting: Beauty and the Buck,” *Photography Annual*, 1972, 6–8, 10, 14, 18, 20, 22, 25–26.

²¹⁵ Coleman, “Pleasant Escape Into the Past,” 18.

²¹⁶ Coleman, “The Start of the Indian Question,” 16.

shifted from image content to the physical photograph itself, and a new implication for *vintage* begins to emerge.

Jacob Deschin's 1972 article in the *Photography Annual*, itself a fascinating examination of the emerging photography market, uses *vintage* in two slightly different ways. At one point, Deschin notes that Tom Halsted, proprietor of the 831 Gallery in Birmingham, Michigan, "found that most gallery goers wanted vintage prints—Timothy O'Sullivan, David O. Hill, Frederick Evans."²¹⁷ Here again, *vintage* is employed to refer to nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century works specifically, but also implies historical prints, not just images.²¹⁸ Elsewhere in the article, Deschin discusses the rise in prices spurred by an "acceleration in the demand for original prints and some scarcity of certain desirable items." In this context, he notes that "photographers, who often set their own prices...have hiked rates by 50 and 100 percent and higher, depending on their own status, demand for their work, price class of the print, whether vintage or contemporary, etc."²¹⁹ Here, Deschin uses *vintage* to distinguish between early and later prints by the same photographer, specifically one who is still alive and making work. It is this implication that is peculiar to photography, indicating not just a print that is old in and of itself, but one that is *early*, relative to other prints by the same photographer. That said, it is not clear whether Deschin is comparing early and later prints *of the same images*. At this point, we should remember that most practicing photographers did not usually make more than a few prints of a given image, or return to reprint older negatives, since there was generally little demand to do so. Therefore it may be that Deschin is again conflating early images with early prints, simply by default. Nonetheless, the important difference here is that the word is applied to the work of

²¹⁷ Deschin, "Beauty and the Buck," 22.

²¹⁸ This also appears to be the sense in which Newhall and Coke use the term in their *Image* editorial.

²¹⁹ Deschin, "Beauty and the Buck," 6.

living rather than historical practitioners. Significantly, Deschin also includes the question of vintage on a list of characteristics that determine the value of a photograph. Indeed, the use of the term *vintage print* emerged precisely as photographers and dealers were actively trying to develop a pricing structure—as well as a hierarchy of value more broadly—for photographs. I will return to this notion of a hierarchy of value later in the chapter.

Vintage Prints at Auction and in Galleries

As in the popular press, in the first half of the 1970s the term *vintage* appeared only sporadically in gallery, dealer, and auction catalogues, and was not always explained or used consistently. The New York dealer Janet Lehr titled her first several catalogues “Vintage & Modern Photography” starting in 1972, but the word does not otherwise appear in their pages.²²⁰ In this instance, as in the early examples above, the term appears to simply refer to historical nineteenth-century material. Harry Lunn’s eponymous Washington D.C. gallery, Lunn Gallery, which opened in 1968 as a fine print gallery, first included photographs in its second catalogue, published in 1972. [Figure 12] Although Lunn would soon become one of the most powerful and influential forces in the photography market and an ardent proponent of the significance of vintage prints, this early catalogue includes several limited edition reprints of earlier work by photographers such as Walker Evans and Brassai.²²¹ The Witkin Gallery’s first catalogue, published in 1973 with the help of Anne Tucker, includes “a selection of vintage albumen prints of scenes of England” by Francis Bedford, “a large selection of vintage platinum prints” by Frederick Evans, and a “large

²²⁰ See for example Janet Lehr, Inc., *Vintage & Modern Photography* (New York: Janet Lehr, 1972); *Catalogue 4: Vintage & Modern Photography*, (New York, Janet Lehr, Inc., 1977).

²²¹ Graphics International Ltd., *19th and 20th Century Prints Drawings Photographs, Catalogue 1* (Washington, DC: Graphics International Ltd., 1972). Graphics International was the corporation that Lunn formed at the same time that he opened his gallery.

selection of vintage prints of working children” by Lewis Hine. [Figure 13] But other items, including signed prints by Julia Margaret Cameron, calotypes by Hill and Adamson, and hand-numbered and stamped prints by Eugène Atget, are not appended with the same term.²²² Robert Schoelkopf Gallery’s first catalogue of photography, published in 1975 and compiled by Marcuse (“Cusie”) Pfeifer, lists “vintage prints, archivally processed, from the late Twenties and early Thirties” by Margaret Bourke-White and a “vintage contact print” by Walker Evans. In some cases, the catalogue also mentions prints “made later,” but for the most part the photographs’ relative age is unremarked.²²³ The Allan Frumkin Gallery, which opened in Chicago in 1952 and usually exhibited paintings, prints, and drawings, organized its first photography exhibition in 1973. The corresponding catalogue does not use the term *vintage* at all, although a note at the beginning states that “unless otherwise indicated all items in the exhibition are original photographic prints,” and guarantees their authenticity.²²⁴ In 1976, however, the gallery published *Man Ray: Vintage Photographs Solarizations and Rayographs*, a catalogue that includes *vintage* in the description of nearly every single print.²²⁵ Interestingly, another Man Ray catalogue published a year earlier by the G. Ray Hawkins Gallery similarly foregrounds the prints’ vintage status.²²⁶ [Figure 14] The Sander Gallery’s 1976 catalogue of

²²² Witkin Gallery, *Catalogue I: Rare and Contemporary Prints and Books* (New York: The Witkin Gallery, Inc., 1973), 18, 19, 20, 30. Tucker became the founding curator of photography at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston in 1976.

²²³ Robert Schoelkopf Gallery, *Photography Catalogue Number One*, (New York: Robert Schoelkopf Gallery, 1975), n.p. Marcuse Pfeifer opened her eponymous New York photography gallery in 1976.

²²⁴ Allan Frumkin Gallery, *Photographs: Photographs and Photographic Material from 1840–1972* (Chicago: Allan Frumkin Gallery, 1973), 2.

²²⁵ Allan Frumkin Gallery, *Man Ray: Vintage Photographs Solarizations and Rayographs* (Chicago: Allan Frumkin Gallery / Photographs Inc., 1976).

²²⁶ G. Ray Hawkins Gallery, *Vintage Photographs of Man Ray* (Los Angeles: G. Ray Hawkins Gallery, 1975).

photographs by August Sander simply notes, “all prints unless otherwise specified are vintage prints.”²²⁷

Auction houses, like galleries, generally paid scant attention to photographs prior to the 1970s. Denise Bethel has published an important in-depth account of the history of photography’s circulation among rare book dealers, including the first American auction dedicated exclusively to photography, held at Swann Galleries in 1952.²²⁸ [Figure 15, Figure 16] As Bethel notes, the buyers at the “Marshall sale” were primarily book dealers, with the addition of bellwethers Beaumont Newhall and Louis Walton Siple, both curators of photography.²²⁹ The sale itself “spawned no followers,” she writes, “and photography at auction slipped back into the world of books and mixed sales until 1967.”²³⁰ That year, Sotheby Parke-Bernet held an auction of photographs and photographic instruments from the collection of Will Weissberg, who worked for the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel as a publicity photographer.²³¹ [Figure 17] Three years later, in 1970, the auction house held two sales of private collections of photographs and photographic paraphernalia, those of Sidney Strober, a “part-time commission salesman for photography studios,”²³² and Dr. Charles Cornelius Greenway, a pastor at the All Souls Congregational

²²⁷ Sander Gallery, *August Sander 1876–1976* (Washington, DC: Sander Gallery, 1976), n.p. Judging by the catalogue checklist, the vast majority of the prints are indeed vintage, with the exception of a handful of “reprints.”

²²⁸ Denise Bethel, “At Auction and in the Book Trade: Sources for the Photography Historian,” Swann Auction Galleries, *Photography: A Panoramic History of the Art of Photography as Applied to Book Illustration, from Its Inception up to Date; the Important Collection of the Late Albert E. Marshall of Providence, R.I.* (New York: Swann Auction Galleries, 1952).

²²⁹ Newhall was then stationed at the George Eastman House, while Siple was heading the American Museum of Photography in Philadelphia.

²³⁰ Bethel, “At Auction and in the Book Trade,” 119.

²³¹ Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc., *The Will Weissberg Collection of Rare Photographs, Cameras & Related Devices*. (New York: Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc., May 16, 1967); Bethel, “At Auction and in the Book Trade,” 119. Sotheby & Co. purchased a controlling share in the venerable New York auction house Parke-Bernet in 1964, thus establishing the older company’s first overseas salesroom. Sanka Knox, “Sotheby’s Acquires 75% of Parke-Bernet,” *The New York Times*, July 15, 1964.

²³² Bethel, “At Auction and in the Book Trade,” 119.

Church in Brooklyn.²³³ Writing in the aftermath of the Strober auction, Jacob Deschin remarked that “the value of antique miscellany in the field of photographics has been raised appreciably,” and noted that the total sales were more than double the pre-sale estimate.²³⁴ Sotheby’s New York office held subsequent sales of photography in 1971 and 1972, before going temporarily quiet.²³⁵ According to rare book dealer and former auction house expert Stuart Bennett, despite the relative success of the Strober auction, the two New York sales that followed were not especially lucrative.²³⁶

Meanwhile, in 1971 Sotheby’s opened a second London salesroom in the city’s Belgravia district. The new location was spearheaded by Howard Ricketts, then Director of the Works of Art department, and Director Marcus Linnell. It was to be devoted entirely to nineteenth-century art, at that time an essentially neglected area of the art market, with the exception of Impressionist painting.²³⁷ Ricketts had joined Sotheby’s in 1959 as an Arms and Armor specialist, but by 1970 had become personally interested in photography, and was instrumental in convincing Linnell that photographs should be included in the new sales program. In December 1971, Sotheby’s Belgravia held its inaugural auction of photography, overseen by the young

²³³ The latter was a two-part auction, the second half of which was held the following year. Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc., *Rare Photographic Images, Apparatus & Literature. The Collection of Sidney Strober and Other Owners*. (New York: PB 84, February 7, 1970); Sotheby Parke-Bernet Inc., *Cornelius Greenway Historical Collection of Inscribed Photographs. Part One*. (New York: PB 84, November 20, 1970); *Cornelius Greenway Historical Collection of Inscribed Photographs, Part Two: The XXth Century, & Autographs*. (New York: PB 84, May 4, 1971); Sanka Knox, “Greenway Photo Collection Is Sold,” *The New York Times*, May 5, 1971.

²³⁴ That estimate, a modest \$33,000, was met only halfway through the auction; the final total was \$61,870. Arnold Crane’s purchase of Alexander Gardner’s *Photographic Sketchbook of the War* for \$5,200 was, Deschin notes, “exactly four times the amount brought at the Will Weissberg auction in May of 1967.” Jacob Deschin, “Photography,” *The New York Times*, February 15, 1970.

²³⁵ Sotheby Parke-Bernet, Inc., *Photographs and Photographic Literature*. (New York: Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc., April 20, 1971); *Photographs and Photographic Literature*. (New York: Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc., February 22, 1972).

²³⁶ Stuart Bennett, conversation with the author, March 4, 2022.

²³⁷ Philippe Garner, conversation with the author, April 14, 2022; Howard Ricketts, conversation with the author, February 22, 2022.

Philippe Garner. This auction is often considered the opening salvo of the modern photography market, insofar as it marked the start of a dedicated program of sales.²³⁸ [Figure 18] The success of the sale led to another in 1972,²³⁹ the year that Christie's joined the fray with its first London photography auction.²⁴⁰ Sotheby's and Christie's held two sales each in 1973.²⁴¹ By December of 1973, what Philippe Garner has referred to as the "American invasion"—the steady influx of collectors and dealers from North America—was underway, with buyers including Harry Lunn, Scott Elliott, Sam Wagstaff, and many others becoming regular fixtures.²⁴² In response to this growing interest, Belgravia began thrice-annual photography sales starting in 1974, increasingly resulting in headline-worthy sales and the occasional public uproar as prices continued to climb.²⁴³ [Figure 19] One of the most high-profile instances was the October 18 sale of an album of ninety-four photographs by Julia Margaret Cameron, presented by the photographer to Sir John Herschel in 1864. American collector Sam Wagstaff placed the winning bid of £52,000, an enormous sum at the time. A public campaign soon followed, spearheaded by the English *Amateur Photographer* magazine along with Colin Ford, the photography curator at the National

²³⁸ Sotheby's Belgravia, *A 19th and 20th Century Collector's Sale* (London: Sotheby's Belgravia, December 21, 1971); Michael Diemar, "Philippe Garner," *The Classic*, no. 2 (Autumn 2019): 30–41.

²³⁹ Sotheby's Belgravia, *A 19th and 20th Century Collector's Sale* (London: Sotheby's Belgravia, December 13, 1972). Both of these first sales included photography, but also an array of non-photographic items including toys and miscellaneous mechanical and scientific instruments.

²⁴⁰ Christie, Manson & Woods, *Victorian Photographs and Photographica* (London: Christie, Manson & Woods, 1972).

²⁴¹ Sotheby's Belgravia, *Early Photographic Images and Related Material* (London: Sotheby's Belgravia, May 24, 1973); *Early Photographic Images and Related Material* (London: Sotheby's Belgravia, December 4, 1973); Christie, Manson & Woods, *Victorian Cameras, Photographs and Photographica* (London: Christie, Manson & Woods, June 14, 1973); *Victorian Cameras, Photographs and Photographica* (London: Christie, Manson & Woods, October 4, 1973).

²⁴² Philippe Garner, "The Birth of the Modern Auction Market, 1971–1975: A Personal Memoir" (lecture, The Frick Collection, New York, NY, May 9, 2015).

²⁴³ Sotheby's Belgravia, *Early Photographic Images and Related Material* (London: Sotheby's Belgravia, March 8, 1974); *Early Photographic Images and Related Material* (London: Sotheby's Belgravia, June 21, 1974); *Early Photographic Images and Related Material* (London: Sotheby's Belgravia, October 18, 1974).

Portrait Gallery in London, to raise matching funds and prevent the album from leaving the United Kingdom.²⁴⁴ The campaign was ultimately successful, and the album remained in London in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery.²⁴⁵ [Figure 20]

Nearly all of the photography auctions in the first half of the 1970s dealt principally with nineteenth-century material, but the specific concept of *vintage* is nowhere to be found in the corresponding catalogues. It seems the historical quality of their contents was implicit. This began to change in 1975, when Sotheby Parke-Bernet in New York revived its photography program, holding two auctions of “important 19th and 20th century photographs.”²⁴⁶ The word *important* is striking here, signaling the rising status of photography, or at least certain kinds of photographs. Stuart Bennett, who organized these two sales, has said that the renewed interest in photography auctions stemmed directly from the unprecedented success of the Belgravia sales. Furthermore, this success can be attributed in large part to those sales’ approach to selling photographs as art, rather than as collectible ephemera.²⁴⁷ Also noteworthy in these two sales is the equal billing afforded both nineteenth- and twentieth-century photography. The February sale included works by Alfred Stieglitz and members of the Photo-Secession, as well as Lewis Hine, Man Ray, Walker Evans, and Ansel Adams. Tellingly, among the Adams works is a “mint” copy

²⁴⁴ Several cordial letters between Wagstaff and Ford reside in the Wagstaff Papers at the Getty, along with related news clippings. Series IV, box 87, folders 2 and 5, Samuel Wagstaff Papers, 2005.M.46, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California.

²⁴⁵ In 1984 the album was transferred to the collection of what is now the National Science and Media Museum, where it still resides.

²⁴⁶ Sotheby Parke-Bernet, Inc., *Important 19th and 20th Century Photographs* (New York: Sotheby Parke-Bernet Inc., February 25, 1975); *Important 19th and 20th Century Photographs* (New York: Sotheby Parke-Bernet, Inc., September 23, 1975).

²⁴⁷ Stuart Bennett, conversation with the author, March 4, 2022. As a London law student with a passionate interest in books, the American-born Bennett tried unsuccessfully for two years to land a job at Sotheby’s, before finally being hired in 1974 at the New York office. He organized the two 1975 photography sales there before moving back to London. Soon after, he was hired to helm the photography department at Christie’s new South Kensington office. In 1980 he left the auction world to become a rare book dealer.

of *Portfolio VI*, published just a year earlier in 1974. [Figure 21] Adams was already one of the rare living photographers whose market value seemed consistently assured, and the portfolio was likely consigned by Harry Lunn, who by this time had a significant stake in Adams's success, as I will discuss in my last chapter. The September sale includes an even wider assortment of twentieth-century work, including photographs by Edward Weston, Weegee, Brassai, Aaron Siskind, Diane Arbus, W. Eugene Smith, and Nathan Lerner. Bennett remembers, in fact, that the morning sessions, which focused on nineteenth-century material, were relatively subdued. It was not until the afternoon sessions of twentieth-century photography that the bidding among the dealers in attendance grew much livelier.²⁴⁸ In the catalogues for both of these sales, meanwhile, the twentieth-century examples are most often characterized as "original prints," sometimes with the rather incongruous addition of "hand-pulled." The latter term seems to be an attempt to explicitly align these photographs with traditional graphics, but has nothing to do with how photographs are actually made. In the September sale, some prints by twentieth-century photographers are designated as vintage, while others are identified as having been made from an earlier negative. Overall one gets the clear sense here of the inchoate nature of language around photography, and in particular around more recent photographic prints.

In March of 1975, Sotheby's Belgravia also held a sale of contemporary photography as a fundraiser for the Photographers' Gallery in London, which consisted entirely of new prints donated by living photographers.²⁴⁹ This sale was in fact the first time that the work of many of these photographers was sold at auction. The highest price realized was £260 for an Irving Penn portrait of the novelist Colette, purchased by Sam Wagstaff. Christie's South Kensington

²⁴⁸ Bennett, conversation with the author, March 4, 2022.

²⁴⁹ Sotheby's Belgravia, *Contemporary Photographic Images* (London: Sotheby's Belgravia, March 19, 1975). The auction was organized by Philippe Garner at Sotheby's and Sue Davies of the Photographers' Gallery.

salesroom began holding photography sales in 1976, as did the New York print dealer Martin Gordon, at his eponymous (and short-lived) auction house, staffed by Dale Stulz as Director of the Photographs Department.²⁵⁰ Martin Gordon seems to have been unique among these auction houses for featuring both fine prints and photographs in the same sale. [Figure 22] Each of these auction houses' mid-1970s sales included both nineteenth- and twentieth-century photographs, with the exception of the Photographers' Gallery benefit, which comprised only the latter.²⁵¹

Although the term *vintage* began to appear in dealer catalogues as early as 1972, and in auction catalogues a few years later, the fact that none of these publications explain or define it—or even use it consistently—might indicate that it was taken as self-evident, or that it wasn't deemed significant enough to belabor. As the market expanded and *vintage* became a more widely used concept over the course of the decade, it was actually defined and discussed more often, not less. In general, the rather hodge-podge nature of the terminology found in these early catalogues evinces the absence of any standardized way of describing photographs, particularly in terms of their material specificity and value as collectibles. Roughly around 1976, a number of gradual shifts began to coalesce, becoming evident in both the dealer and auction catalogues and mirroring a more general sea change in the photography market at large. The fifth catalogue issued by Lunn's Graphics International Ltd. in September 1976, edited by Peter Galassi, is a

²⁵⁰ Martin Gordon, *Auction #1 of 19th and 20th Century Prints & Photographs* (New York: Martin Gordon, Inc., May 3, 1976); *Auction #2 of 19th and 20th Century Prints & Photographs* (New York: Martin Gordon, Inc., November 13–15, 1976). Stulz went on to establish first the photography auction house Argus Ltd. in 1977, and then the Department of 19th and 20th Century Photographs at Christie, Manson, and Woods, both in New York. He later served briefly as the director of LIGHT Gallery, before becoming an independent appraiser and auctioneer.

²⁵¹ 1976 also marked Swann Galleries' return to photography auctions, which it had not held since the 1952 Marshall Sale. These were exclusively dedicated to nineteenth-century photographs and photographica.

telling benchmark.²⁵² By then, Lunn had emerged as a major player in the market, and it is a testament to his success that the catalogue from this year is devoted exclusively to photographs.²⁵³ The introduction to the catalogue, written by Lunn, offers an enthusiastic summary of the previous five years both as they pertain to photography in general and to Lunn's business in particular. "As the art history of the rest of the century unfolds," he writes,

there will be many theories on the rise of interest in photography, but most simply stated it appears that about 1970, a new awareness of the medium began to develop among museum directors and curators, writers, private collectors and art dealers. This interest has resulted in an explosion of exhibitions both private and public, and catalogues and monographs, which in turn have created a new group of collectors. Our own experience as dealers parallels the trend.²⁵⁴

Lunn's sense of the market's growing seriousness and sophistication is echoed in the rigor of the catalogue itself. The Editor's Note, written by Galassi, contains a meticulous account of the sources consulted for the catalogue, pointing both to the "standard photographic literature" and a prodigious list of experts including other dealers, collectors, and curators.²⁵⁵ The bibliography at the end of the catalogue is a densely packed two pages long, a marked contrast to the meagerness of most bibliographies, when there were any, in catalogues from just a few years earlier. This shift points not only to the surge of new publications on photographic subjects, but to the scholarly excavation of historical source material. Indeed it must be emphasized that the ascension of the photography market was intrinsically linked to the boom in photography scholarship, and that collectors and dealers were often the drivers of new research. Much of the

²⁵² Lunn Gallery, *19th and 20th Century Photographs*, Catalogue 5 (Washington, DC: Graphics International Ltd., 1976). At this point still a student, Galassi went on to become the Chief Curator of Photography at the Museum of Modern art from 1991 to 2011, succeeding John Szarkowski.

²⁵³ His 1975 catalogue also contained only photographs, but focused specifically on the albums of Julia Margaret Cameron. Lunn Gallery, *Julia Margaret Cameron: An Album* (Washington, DC: Graphics International Ltd., 1975).

²⁵⁴ Lunn Gallery, *Catalogue 5*, 1.

²⁵⁵ Lunn Gallery, *Catalogue 5*, 2. Among them, Timothy Baum, Arnold Crane, André Jammes, Eugenia Parry Janis, Weston Naef, George Rinhart, Maria Morris, and Sam Wagstaff.

energy of this period derived not only from the skyrocketing prices or the proliferation of new galleries, but from a genuine sense of discovery. As Lunn puts it, “Literally each month new collections and the work of hitherto unknown or unrecognized artists comes to light. Each new museum or dealer catalogue brings fresh knowledge to the field and reshapes perceptions of the importance of various artists and stylistic movements.”²⁵⁶ As demand and enthusiasm grew, dealers, auction houses, and private sellers were spurred to sniff out languishing caches of photographs and to uncover the names and identities of anonymous practitioners.

Notwithstanding the later (and even contemporaneous) critiques about the highly selective interests and agendas of many of these participants, the fact remains that much of their work has formed the bedrock of subsequent scholarship and the growth of the field. To cite just one example here, we might consider curator Judith Keller’s magisterial 1995 publication on Walker Evans, a comprehensive examination of the 1,200 prints and related archival material held in the collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum.²⁵⁷ This unparalleled concentration of important work by Evans stems from the individual collections of Arnold Crane (who bought over 1,000 photographs directly from, and in close consultation with, the artist in the late 1960s), Sam Wagstaff (who obtained his Evans material from the Robert Schoelkopf Gallery and from dealer George Reinhart in the 1970s), and the German collectors Volker Kahmen and George Heusch (who purchased their photographs from Harry Lunn, also in the late 1970s).²⁵⁸ [Figure 23, Figure 24] These three collections were part of the Getty’s historic 1984 purchase of seventeen

²⁵⁶ Lunn Gallery, *Catalogue 5*, 1.

²⁵⁷ Judith Keller, *Walker Evans: The Getty Museum Collection* (Malibu, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum, 1995). See also John B. Rohrbach, review of *Walker Evans: The Getty Museum Collection*, by Judith Keller, *Winterthur Portfolio* 30, no. 4 (1995): 298–301.

²⁵⁸ Keller, *Walker Evans*, ix. See also Robert Schoelkopf Gallery, *Walker Evans: Photographs, 1930-1971* (New York: Robert Schoelkopf Gallery, 1977); Lunn Gallery, *Walker Evans I* (Washington, DC: Graphics International Ltd., 1977).

important groups of photographs, including major collections from Crane, Wagstaff, Kahmen and Heusch, André Jammes, and Bruno Bischofberger, which comprised the foundational core of the museum's collection of photography.²⁵⁹ Thus the activities of dealers and collectors in the 1970s, however financially motivated, have been directly responsible for the consolidation and preservation of key holdings of photography, which can form the material basis for sustained research projects based on those collections. It is also worth acknowledging that, in turn, Keller's major work of scholarship was necessarily beholden to the decisions made by the collectors who assembled the photographs, and to their particular tastes and biases.

The rigorous research that is increasingly evident in dealer and auction catalogues from this period manifests not only in the breadth of the bibliographies, but in the level of detail and extensiveness of the lot descriptions, which sometimes include lengthy historical summaries, particularly for high-priced items; as well as in the number, size, and quality of illustrations, including the occasional reproduction of "black and white" photographic prints in full color. [Figure 25] Dale Stulz has credited Martin Gordon with being the first to include illustrations of every single item in his auction catalogues, along with price estimates printed directly below each lot, rather than in a separate list at the back of the catalogue.²⁶⁰ [Figure 26] In fact, neither of these innovations were immediately adopted by other auction houses, but photography catalogues in general became much more copiously illustrated as time went on. As these catalogues grew more scholarly and robust, their descriptive language also grew more precise. In the 1976 Lunn catalogue, Peter Galassi adds a brief definition of *vintage*, which appears in his

²⁵⁹ Andy Grundberg, "The Getty Makes Room for Photography," *The New York Times*, June 23, 1985; Margaret Harker, "Getty in the Picture," *The British Journal of Photography*, September 13, 1985, 1028–31; Judith Keller, "The Department of Photographs at the Getty Museum," *History of Photography* 15, no. 4 (Winter 1991): 253–57.

²⁶⁰ Dale Stulz, conversation with the author, February 20, 2021.

Editor's Note, along with an explanation of how the photographs in the catalogue are dated and titled:

Titles are taken from the works themselves or from other examples of them. The date of the negative follows the title. If the print is not vintage, that is, if it was not made at roughly the same time as the negative, the date of the print follows the positive process.²⁶¹

The level of precision and consistency is to a certain extent a matter of style, and varies considerably among the different auction houses and dealers. Nonetheless, after 1976 or 1977 it is much more common to find explanations and glossaries of this kind in photography catalogues, specifically in those from the United States. And the term that one finds defined most often is *vintage*, occasionally accompanied by related terms such as *non-vintage* and even *facsimile*.²⁶² The term is frequently presented along with explanations about titles, measurements, and print condition, and usually with the assurance that all of the prints offered for sale are vintage unless specified otherwise. One assumes that, in most instances, auction and dealer sales prior to this point were already mostly selling what we would now call vintage prints, whether or not the specific term was used. But it is evident that by the mid to late 1970s it became imperative to make this fact clear to prospective buyers, in increasingly codified and transparent language, as an indicator of authenticity and value.

Vintage in the Popular Press

²⁶¹ Lunn Gallery, *Catalogue 5*, 2.

²⁶² See for example Sotheby's, *Important 19th and 20th Century Photographs*. (New York: Sotheby's, October 4, 1977); Argus Ltd., *Photographs by Edward Steichen* (New York: Argus, Ltd., May 1, 1978); Christie, Manson & Woods International Inc., *19th Century, Modern and Contemporary Prints and Photographs* (New York: Christie, Manson & Woods, 1978); Christie's East, *19th and 20th Century Photographs* (New York: Christie's East, May 4, 1979); Phillips New York, *Vintage Photographs by Henri Cartier-Bresson*. (New York: Phillips New York, May 7, 1979).

In addition to these commercial publications—the sales catalogues issued by dealers and auction houses—*vintage* as a concept also began to appear more frequently in mass media articles about the emergent market for photography, where it continued to refer both to antique or historical photographs and to early iterations of more recent work.²⁶³ Newspapers, journals, and magazines were fascinated by the sudden boom in this previously non-existent market. And in many instances, writers—whether photography “insiders” or general interest reporters—emphasized that vintage photographs were a “bright spot” not only for photography itself, but in the larger art market as well. The earliest appearance of *vintage* in *The Print Collector’s Newsletter* is exemplary, and occurs in a 1974 report by collector Dan Berley on one of the major early sales of photography at Sotheby’s Belgravia. “If one looks for reasons as to why photographic sales continue to go higher and higher,” Berley writes,

they are not hard to find. First, there is the general surge of interest in 19th-century art and Victoriana in particular. Second, American collectors, dealers, and institutions have invaded the London auction rooms. They come with seemingly endless supplies of capital. Among the dealers are former and present fine print dealers who have found the demand for vintage photographic material in the United States very strong. More important, some of these dealers seem to be attempting to establish a very high base for high-quality art, which is definitely becoming scarcer.²⁶⁴

The list of prices realized for this auction, which during this period included the names of the purchasers themselves, reveals a veritable who’s-who of the era’s leading photography collectors and dealers, including Harry Lunn, George Rinhart, Lee Witkin, Scott Elliott, Sam Wagstaff,

²⁶³ See for example Manuela Hoelterhoff, “New Values in Vintage Photographs,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 17, 1974; Dorothy Gallagher, “The Print Principle: Today’s Philosophy for Investing in Art,” *Village Voice*, March 10, 1975; Hilton Kramer, “Boom in Art Photography Poses Problem in Expertise,” *New York Times*, September 22, 1975; Roberta Faul, “A Bright Spot in the Art Market,” *Museum News*, May 1975, 27–31; William Flanagan, ed., “Collecting Photos for Love and Profit,” *Business Week*, October 20, 1975, 105–6; Jack Manning, “Prices Will Definitely Continue to Climb,” *The New York Times*, January 1, 1978.

²⁶⁴ Dan Berley, “Photographs at Sotheby’s Belgravia,” *The Print Collector’s Newsletter* 5, no. 2 (May–June 1974): 39. Berley was already by this time also Lee Witkin’s business partner in Witkin-Berley, Ltd., an imprint for limited edition photography portfolios.

Robert Mapplethorpe, Graham Ovenden, and Marjorie Neikrug.²⁶⁵ [Figure 27] And by Berley's account, all were in hot pursuit of "vintage photographic material." Again, the majority of photography auctions in the first half of the 1970s focused on nineteenth-century work, and in any case Sotheby's Belgravia was explicitly dedicated to material from that period. Berley's use of *vintage* thus retains its link to historical photography, emphasizing that this is what American collectors and dealers were traveling to London to purchase. That said, it is also interesting to observe that even in the context of *The Print Collector's Newsletter*, which celebrated the overlap between the print and photography worlds, *vintage* is a term reserved exclusively for photography. It is never applied to traditional graphics, a distinction that still persists today.

In 1975, the Chicago lawyer and voracious collector Arnold Crane penned one of the era's most striking statements on the appeal of vintage photographs. [Figure 28] His short but rapturous "Advice from a Photograph Collector" was published in *The New York Times* as an inset to Richard Blodgett's *Arts and Leisure* cover story, "Blow Up—The Story of Photography in Today's Art Market."²⁶⁶ Written in response to the hypothetical question "What do you look for in a photographic work?," Crane's exposition on the special merits of vintage prints is worth quoting:

Thus educated [to look at photographs], one discovers an ethereal presence in vintage material that many of the new photographic people are slow to understand. Vintage prints, by the way, are those made by the photographer close to the time at which the picture was taken. Run, don't walk, from anything but a vintage work, for the vintage work has the unexplainable magic of presence; that actual presence of its master creator.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ Sotheby's Belgravia, *Early Photographic Images and Related Material* (London: Sotheby's Belgravia, March 8 1974). A copy held at the J. Paul Getty museum, which belonged to Sam Wagstaff, includes a tipped-in list of final prices and buyers. The word *vintage* does not appear in the catalogue itself, and indeed seems not to have been used by Sotheby's Belgravia at all.

²⁶⁶ Richard Blodgett, "Blow Up—The Story of Photography In Today's Art Market," *The New York Times*, October 12, 1975. The echo in Blodgett's title of Michelangelo Antonioni's 1966 hit *Blow-Up* is certainly not accidental. The film has often been credited anecdotally as a key instigator for the growing interest in photography in the late 1960s.

²⁶⁷ Arnold H. Crane, "Advice from a Photograph Collector," *The New York Times*, October 12, 1975.

It is clear that Crane's appreciation for vintage photographs is closely linked to his own sense of himself as a connoisseur, and the status of his personal photography collection. The "magic" of the vintage print is one that he has learned to identify through careful study, and to which he claims to have a heightened, visceral response. While Crane's article certainly evinces a genuine collector's passion for the medium of photography, he also stakes his claim as an educated expert in a field recently overrun by "new photographic people" who have not yet learned how to properly look. *Vintage* thus functions as a tool of connoisseurship and a means of gatekeeping. It is not simply a way of indicating that a given photograph is old, a quality that anyone might be able to understand and identify. Rather, it is bound up in an elite, even elitist, practice of expert evaluation, and also elevates individual photographers to the status of masters.

The general definition of vintage photographs as "those made by the photographer close to the time at which the picture was taken," to repeat Crane's phrasing, was established by the middle of the 1970s. But, as we have seen, in many cases the term continued to emphasize nineteenth-century work, although it also soon came to include such modernist "masters" as Edward Weston, Edward Steichen, Alfred Stieglitz, Ansel Adams, Eugène Atget, Imogen Cunningham, and Walker Evans. In other words, photographers whose reputations were secure, and whose work fit neatly into the standards being established by dealers and collectors. These photographers were all known for the quality (and scarcity) of their photographic prints, and figured prominently in the increasingly codified history of photography, especially as told through such published references as Beaumont Newhall's *The History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present*.²⁶⁸ Indeed, Newhall's *History* often functioned as kind of market guide,

²⁶⁸ Newhall, *The History of Photography*. Newhall's *History* has continued to be re-printed and updated in the decades since its first publication in 1949. In the 1970s the most recent edition would have been from 1964.

particularly for those still new to the field. Peter Bunnell remembered receiving a phone call from a collector who wanted to purchase a photograph from LIGHT Galley, but was hesitating because the photographer “wasn't even in the history.” This turned out to be a work by Frederick Sommer, who wasn't included in Newhall's book.²⁶⁹

The narrowness of the term *vintage*, however, continued to broaden over the years, likely for the simple reason that what counts as historical or important inevitably shifts with the passage of time. Museum of Modern Art curator John Szarkowski captured something of this phenomenon with his usual dry wit: “Collectors start with the great dead photographers, [...] and then move on to those who are great and old. If their confidence and sophistication develops they get to the photographers who are good and middle-aged.”²⁷⁰ In other words, the market value of work by well-known, deceased photographers was the surest bet for a neophyte collector. Investing in newer photography was not only more of a financial risk, but arguably required a more sophisticated understanding of the medium and of art in general. This dichotomy between established masters and younger or less-known practitioners was certainly evident in the rosters and price lists of dealers at the time, as well as in the activity of the auction houses. As previously noted, popular articles in the 1970s breathlessly reported on the unprecedented prices achieved for photographic works, but for years these were almost exclusively confined to pictures by the likes of Julia Margaret Cameron, Alfred Stieglitz, and other accepted masters of the medium. [Figure 29] One exception to the preference for such blue-chip names were rare portraits of iconic personages who were historically important enough that it didn't matter if the

²⁶⁹ Peter Bunnell, conversation with the author, May 11, 2020. Bunnell ultimately encouraged the collector to purchase the Sommer print.

²⁷⁰ Quoted in Gallagher, “The Print Principle,” 87. Gallagher's article is concerned overall with the remarkable rise in status for photographs and the emergence of a lucrative market; in this section, she is specifically discussing the price discrepancies between historical and new works.

photographer was unknown. An anonymous daguerreotype of Edgar Allen Poe, for example, was cited regularly in articles and books throughout the entire decade. This celebrated object was purchased in 1973 by dealer George Reinhart for \$9,250. Thereafter it was sold twice more, first for \$18,750, and finally for \$35,000, “an all-time record for a single photograph.”²⁷¹ The collector who finally obtained the daguerreotype for this reputed sum was Arnold Crane.²⁷²

[Figure 30] Reports on these transactions were often contradictory and scant on details—the final price for the work may have been partially covered by trades rather than cash—but the story gained a great deal of attention and dangled the tantalizing possibility of unprecedented returns on investment. Years later, Tennyson Schad, proprietor of LIGHT Gallery, remarked on this notorious “triple play” of sales:

Readers swooned, the caper became legend, but no commentator ever asked how much cash had actually changed hands in the transactions. History also failed to note that the principals were not exactly strangers. Well, it made a good story. It also made a market.²⁷³

Photograph Collecting Guides

In addition to Crane’s definition of *vintage* in *The New York Times*, and its use in numerous other articles and catalogues, the term eventually circulated in the book-length collecting guides that

²⁷¹ Jacob Deschin, “Viewpoint: Reputed \$35,000 Sale of Daguerreotype;” Mull, “Investors in the Camera Masterpieces;” Jerry E. Patterson, “The Photography Boom,” *Art News*, April 1976, 58–64; Jack Manning, “Prices Will Definitely Continue to Climb,” *The New York Times*, January 1, 1978; Sally Urang, “A Healthy Market for Vintage Photos,” *The New York Times*, September 16, 1979. See also George Gilbert, *Collecting Photographica: The Images and Equipment of the First Hundred Years of Photography* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1976), xii, 3; Landt Dennis and Lisl Dennis, *Collecting Photographs: A Guide to the New Art Boom* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1977), 59; Margaret A. Haller, *Collecting Old Photographs* (New York: Arco Pub. Co, 1978), 5. The daguerreotype now resides in the formidable collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum, object number 84.XT.957.

²⁷² Interestingly, the daguerreotype was featured on the cover of the Scott Elliott Gallery’s 1974 catalogue, but wasn’t appended with a price. Elliott’s involvement in the whole saga, and indeed the specific details of the transactions, remain unclear. Scott Elliott Gallery, *Masters of Photography, 1844–1954* (New York: Scott Elliott Gallery, 1974).

²⁷³ Tennyson Schad, “Shooting from the Hip,” in *How to Make Your Money Make Money* (New York: Dow Jones-Irwin, 1981), 217.

began to proliferate in the 1970s. Like the era's photography auctions, the earliest of these focused on historical photographs and photography-related artifacts such as cameras. *Vintage* was used sparingly in these books, when it was used at all. Peter Castle's 1973 *Collecting and Valuing Old Photographs*, perhaps the first photograph collecting book of the 1970s, eschews the term altogether, referring instead to "old" or "early" photographs.²⁷⁴ The same is true of B. E. C. Howarth-Loomes's 1974 *Victorian Photography: An Introduction for Collectors and Connoisseurs*.²⁷⁵ The 1976 tome *Collecting Photographica: The Images and Equipment of the First Hundred Years of Photography* mentions "a coterie of antique dealers specializing in photographic vintage items," while the *Collector's Guide to Nineteenth-Century Photographs*, published the same year, alludes to a "movement for collecting and preserving vintage photographs."²⁷⁶ In both books, as suggested by their respective titles, *vintage* is used in a standard way to refer to historical photographs, a meaning that neither author finds it necessary to clarify or expand upon.

The first book-length collecting guide to pay serious attention to contemporary work, including color photography, was Landt and Lisl Dennis's 1977 *Collecting Photographs: A*

²⁷⁴ Peter Castle, *Collecting and Valuing Old Photographs* (London: Garnstone Press, 1973). The only earlier book-length (albeit very slim) collecting guide of which I am aware is a rather singular outlier, published in 1957. The author, Louis Walton Siple, was the founder and director of the American Museum of Photography in Philadelphia. See Louis Walton Siple, *A Collector's Guide to American Photography* (Philadelphia: American Museum of Photography, 1957).

²⁷⁵ B. E. C. Howarth-Loomes, *Victorian Photography: An Introduction For Collectors And Connoisseurs* (London: Ward Lock Limited, 1974). Castle worked with the Photographic Collection at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, while Howarth-Loomes was a photograph collector who specialized in stereoscopic views.

²⁷⁶ George Gilbert, *Collecting Photographica: The Images and Equipment of the First Hundred Years of Photography* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1976), xi; William Welling, *Collectors' Guide to Nineteenth-Century Photographs* (New York: Collier Books, 1976), xvi. Gilbert was a photograph collector, the founding president of the Photographic Historical Society of New York, and an editor of the Society's periodical *Photographica*. Welling was also a director of the Photographic Historical Society.

Guide to the New Art Boom.²⁷⁷ As such, it is also the first to include a dedicated chapter addressing collectors' skittishness about the purportedly unlimited reproducibility of photographic prints. This chapter, bearing the sunny title "How to Be Positive About a Negative: The Facts About Investing in a Seemingly Infinite Item," encapsulates the already established claim that collectible photographs are much more rare than is commonly supposed. The Dennises copiously cite Peter Bunnell in this section of their book, often repeating points he established years earlier in his articles on collecting photographs. In this context, *vintage* assumes the more specific slant that I have been discussing. It refers not only to historical prints by deceased photographers, often rare by default, but to early prints by *any* photographer, in contrast to later reprints. In explaining this concept, the authors write, "Because the photograph was presumably taken with the techniques of the craft as well as the materials required to print it in mind, prints made years later, while often very desirable, still cannot be thought of in the same light as the 'vintage' one."²⁷⁸ Here the idea of *vintage* is thus fully merged with Bunnell's earlier explication of originality and rarity. The Dennises go on to discuss the ways that photographic printing materials have evolved over time, such that the precise physical qualities of an early print cannot fully be replicated in later years. I will return to this point shortly.

The authors also specifically address the question of photographers reprinting images by others, often posthumously—Berenice Abbott's prints of Eugène Atget's negatives, Lee Friedlander's of E. J. Bellocq's glass plates, and Cole Weston's of his father Edward Weston's work. In the first two instances, these reprints were important for establishing the reputation of the older photographers. In the case of Bellocq, this was also in large part because there were no

²⁷⁷ Landt Dennis and Lisl Dennis, *Collecting Photographs: A Guide to the New Art Boom* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1977).

²⁷⁸ Dennis and Dennis, *Collecting Photographs*, 104.

known examples of his prints to begin with. For Weston, meanwhile, the reprints helped meet the demand for famous images by a famous photographer who had made precious few prints in his own heyday. Such high-profile cases notwithstanding, the Dennises admit that many collectors insist only on prints made by the original photographer, another key element of *vintage*. In an arresting bit of circular logic, the authors even quote an anonymous collector who concludes his or her endorsement of vintage prints by noting, “No two people print alike. Face it! The very fact that there’s a price difference between an image taken and printed by X and one taken by X and printed by Y proves my point. Thank God there are enough people who see the difference that the market reflects the truth.”²⁷⁹ Certainly we can see how this conference of legitimacy and value to a small subset of photographs—that is, early prints made only by the photographers themselves—begins to create precisely that sense of rarity which some wary collectors worried might otherwise be lacking in the medium.

By the end of the 1970s, *vintage* and its attendant issues of rarity and originality were key points of discussion for photograph collectors. Despite her self-proclaimed emphasis on historical work, Margaret Haller includes the term in the glossary of her 1979 *Collecting Old Photographs*. Its entry concludes with an anonymous quotation that we may find familiar:

Vintage print One made by the photographer himself or under his direct supervision, usually soon after the picture was taken; *not*, therefore, any print made much later or one made by someone else from the same negative. One collector has said that the vintage print “has the unexplainable magic of presence.”²⁸⁰

Haller does not, however, devote any further time to parsing the question of reprints; again, such discussions seem primarily relegated to texts that focus on modern and contemporary work. In addition to the Dennises’ book, the two most significant such guides of the era are *Photographs*:

²⁷⁹ Dennis and Dennis, *Collecting Photographs*, 105.

²⁸⁰ Haller, *Collecting Old Photographs*, 174. Haller’s quotation comes from Arnold Crane’s *New York Times* editorial.

A Collector's Guide by Richard Blodgett and, above all, the monumental *Photograph Collector's Guide* co-authored by Lee Witkin and Barbara London. Both appeared in 1979.²⁸¹ [Figure 31]

By the close of the decade, the photo boom was a full-fledged phenomenon, and these guide books reflect the new cultural landscape. Earlier books for collectors were essentially primers on the history of the medium and the different types of photographs that a new collector might consider. Most included a few pages listing important photography collections, as well as a bibliography largely comprising historical surveys. Some attention was certainly paid to pricing and value, but these sections were not especially extensive. The guides by the Dennises, Blodgett, and Witkin and London also include a great deal of information about key practitioners and photography's material and technical history. Witkin and London even go so far as to reproduce the signatures of the photographers they profile, to help collectors identify a genuine signed print. [Figure 32] In contrast to the earlier guides, however, they also go into much more detail about the market itself, about pricing structures, strategies for buying (where and from whom), how to take care of photographic objects, and the ever-present issues of reproducibility and rarity. In all of this, *vintage* emerges as an area of significant, if fraught, concern, an inextricable part of the metric of evaluation. And it is, by now, a metric. Blodgett devotes several pages, in a chapter titled "'What's It Worth?': How to Determine the Value of a Photograph," to breaking down a number of standards for establishing value. Tellingly, he relies heavily on the advice of Harry Lunn, the dealer most often cited as a prime instigator of the photography market's meteoric financial rise, and a well-known proponent of precisely this kind of standardization. Lunn in this case suggests a "descending scale of values for works by major

²⁸¹ Richard Blodgett, *Photographs: A Collector's Guide*; Lee D. Witkin and Barbara London, *The Photograph Collector's Guide* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1979).

twentieth-century photographers.”²⁸² At the very top, 100 out of 100, is the vintage print, particularly one “printed and hand signed by the photographer.”²⁸³ Of lesser value are, in order, later prints made by the photographer, prints made by an assistant under the photographer’s supervision, posthumous prints made by trained assistants, and finally, at the bottom, posthumous prints by technicians with no direct link to the photographer. Blodgett offers a number of perhaps predictable illustrative examples, including Edward Weston, Hill and Adamson, Imogen Cunningham, Paul Strand, Diane Arbus and several others, each of whose *oeuvre* presents a distinct set of variables.

In a subsequent chapter called “Problem Areas: Authentication, Rarity, Modern Prints from Old Negatives,” Blodgett goes so far as to write, “Ultimately...no single issue hangs over the market to anywhere near the degree as the controversy over vintage versus nonvintage prints.”²⁸⁴ He defines a vintage print as one “which has been made within a few months or perhaps a few years of the taking of the image,” and compares this with a “serial” print, made later. He concedes, however, that “there is no precise dividing line, no specific point in time at which all further prints become serial prints. The concept is much more subjective in nature.”²⁸⁵ Clearly, as Blodgett explains it, there are cases to be made for and against the high value placed on vintage prints over later prints of the same negative. Arnold Crane, cited yet again, stands at one end of the debate, while Blodgett points to Lee Witkin as an advocate of an opposing point of view.

²⁸² Blodgett, *Photographs: A Collector’s Guide*, 16. This construction of a systematic metric for assigning value was a Lunn hallmark. See also Dennis Longwell, “Creating Rarity: Dealers and the Photography Market,” *American Art & Antiques*, May–June 1979, 84–89; Jill Quasha, “The Same Image—Dramatically Different Print Prices—Why?,” *The Photograph Collector XIV*, no. 1 (January 15, 1993): 1–5.

²⁸³ Blodgett, 16.

²⁸⁴ Blodgett, 30–31.

²⁸⁵ Blodgett, *Photographs: A Collector’s Guide*, 31. Interestingly, the term “serial print,” especially used in this way, is not one that I have encountered often. In fact the only other example I have seen is the Witkin and London collecting guide, published the same year.

Witkin, “the well-known New York dealer,” he writes, “says people like Crane are essentially trying to protect their own heavy investments in vintage prints by dismissing serial and posthumous prints out of hand.”²⁸⁶ Of course, it bears mentioning that Witkin was himself an established publisher of limited edition portfolios of both serial and posthumous prints.

In fact, Witkin, in “The Art of Collecting Photographs,” the opening chapter to *The Photograph Collector’s Guide*, offers an especially even-handed meditation on the purported merits of vintage prints. (He is also, among the authors of the guides we are discussing, the only one who is actually a photography dealer.) For one thing, he points out that an insistence on collecting photographs printed by the photographer “rules out many fine images,” citing Jacques Henri Lartigue and André Kertész as two well-known artists who often employed assistants to print their work.²⁸⁷ Admittedly, these two are among the most often cited to make precisely this point, along with Henri Cartier-Bresson. Harold Jones made almost the exact same statement during the first “Photographs & Professionals” roundtable in *The Print Collector’s Newsletter*, calling this the “European” or “artisan” approach to making photographic prints.²⁸⁸ Echoing another point made by Aaron Siskind in the same conversation, Witkin also pays special attention to the prerogative of photographers to return to their negatives for the purpose of creative re-interpretation.²⁸⁹ To illustrate his argument, he reproduces two George Tice prints, made at different times, of the 1973 image *Strand Theater, New Jersey*, in order to demonstrate

²⁸⁶ Blodgett, 31.

²⁸⁷ Witkin and London, *The Photograph Collector’s Guide*, 9.

²⁸⁸ Bunnell et al., “Photographs & Professionals: A Discussion,” 60. Witkin was, of course, present at this and the following two *PCN* discussions.

²⁸⁹ Bunnell et al., 60. After first claiming that anyone else could print his negatives, Siskind follows up, “But I wasn’t stating my case altogether honestly. Because when I tell you that this guy’s print is as good as mine, that’s true. But if I took that negative and I was interested in reprinting it, I don’t know what I’d come out with. I’d come out with something else, because that would be another act, you see.”

the aesthetic qualities of each one.²⁹⁰ [Figure 33] Here he also cites what is surely Ansel Adams's most often-repeated formulation, that "the negative is the score; the print is the performance."²⁹¹ Witkin thus leverages an understanding of photographic printing as a creative, interpretive, and iterative practice to make an argument for the validity of later prints. "Today's print," he writes, "is tomorrow's vintage print. The later *Strand Theater* print by Tice may, in years to come, appear the more interesting of his interpretations and bring a higher price."²⁹²

Hierarchies of *Vintage*

It is important to acknowledge that the term *vintage* did not and does not always apply seamlessly to the wide diversity of photography's history and practice. It has always been part of an almost tautological system for assigning rarity and using rarity to establish value. Nor has there ever been universal agreement about its importance. As with any attempt at neat categorization, the reality is significantly messier and more nuanced. For one thing, *vintage* is just one element in a more complex framework for evaluating photographs, one that began to crystalize during the photo boom and has continued to inform the field. For another, the concept of *vintage* fails to fully account for the variousness of photographic practice and the significance of photographic imagery in the world. Certainly many dealers and collectors would be quick to acknowledge these discrepancies, and I do not wish to give the impression that the photography market is unswervingly beholden to the idea of the vintage print. Still, the preference for early prints made by the photographer who took the picture has had a crucial shaping effect on how photographs have been collected, and has thus informed the nature and quality of what those in

²⁹⁰ Witkin and London, *The Photograph Collector's Guide*, 10.

²⁹¹ Witkin and London, 11.

²⁹² Witkin and London, 12.

the field consider “important” and prestigious collections, whether public or private. In turn, these collections have formed the basis of key exhibitions, publications, and have influenced the direction of scholarship in the field.

Richard Blodgett’s extensive gloss of Harry Lunn’s scale of value for photographs is a telling example of the hierarchies that emerged during this period, and Lunn is by all accounts one of the chief progenitors of this kind of system. While many early dealers were drawn to photography either because they had at one time been practicing photographers, or simply because they found themselves besotted with the medium, Lunn’s approach was more strategic from the beginning. He is frequently credited with playing a major role in elevating the photography market to a serious industry through a range of strategies, including purchasing extensive selections from photographers’ personal estates and selling wholesale to other dealers, thus effectively controlling the market for large swathes of work. He bought, for example, thousands of photographs en masse from the archives of Lewis Hine and Walker Evans, and another thousand from Ansel Adams when the photographer announced his imminent plan to cease taking print orders. Lunn was also involved in concocting this plan in the first place, which both freed Adams from being tethered to his darkroom in perpetuity, and definitively capped the supply of his work circulating in the market. Ultimately, Lunn was insistent that he was an “art dealer” first and foremost, rather than a photography dealer. His early catalogues included both prints and photographs, and he credited this combination with compelling some reticent dealers to accept the latter as valuable works of art.²⁹³ His sense of the art market as a whole, as well as

²⁹³ Typescript of Landt Dennis interview with Harry Lunn, 1976, series VII, box 181, folder 12, Harry Lunn Papers, 004.M.17, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California.

his background in economics,²⁹⁴ were fuel for his aggressive and systematic approach to creating rarity in the market for photographs. [Figure 34]

An undated, unpublished manuscript in the Harry Lunn Papers at the Getty Research Institute offers insight into Lunn's thought process. Titled "The Protocol of Photographic Collecting," it begins,

There are many parallels between the protocol standards for photographs and that for fine etchings and lithographs in regard to numeration and date, with the difference that in the print field the standards for individual periods and artists largely have been established whereas in photography the specific qualitative and quantitative distinctions still are in formulation. This is one of the fascinating and most creative aspects of the emerging market in photography and places a considerable responsibility on dealers as well as collectors and curators for establishing and maintaining standards.²⁹⁵

Lunn saw the establishment of collecting "protocols" as the cornerstone of a robust and lucrative market for photographs. He also saw the photography market as comprising three distinct spheres—nineteenth century, twentieth century, and contemporary—and suggested a range of different considerations for each, in terms of assessing value. Many of the differences have to do with the rarity of each category of work and the existence or absence of later prints from the same negative. Such relative rarity might be due to larger forces such as war or climate, resulting in the destruction or decay of large quantities of photographic material; to photographers' personal working practices; or to the nature of specific mediums or formats. Daguerreotypes, for example, are inherently unique, and as there can be no question of later copies, the idea of a vintage daguerreotype is essentially redundant.²⁹⁶ In this case, Lunn says, the determining factors

²⁹⁴ The Detroit-born Lunn graduated from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in the mid-1950s with an honors degree in economics. Perhaps even more notably, he worked for the Central Intelligence Agency from the late 1950s until 1967, largely under the auspices of the National Students Association, whose international wing was a C.I.A. front.

²⁹⁵ Undated typescript, box 181, folder 12, Harry Lunn Papers.

²⁹⁶ Of course there are instances of copy daguerreotypes, but these are quite rare. There are also contemporary artists who make daguerreotypes, although this practice was certainly even less prevalent in the 1970s than it is today.

as to value might include age, maker (whether known or unknown), condition, signature, the size of the plate, and the beauty, interest, and rarity of the subject. With nineteenth-century paper prints, on the other hand, the question of reprinting becomes immediately more germane, introducing a host of additional considerations. Lunn uses David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson as one such example, noting that their negatives were printed by other photographers, in a range of mediums and quantities, long after Adamson's death in 1848. In this instance, Lunn assigns a higher value to the 1915 carbon prints made by the Scottish photographer Jessie Bartram than to the photogravures made by J. Craig Annan in the 1890s. Although the latter are older, he notes that the former were made in editions of fifty and are closer in appearance to the calotypes made during Adamson's lifetime, which would be considered vintage and the most valuable. Calotypes made by Hill's assistants after Adamson's death come second in Lunn's hierarchy.²⁹⁷ In other words, age is just one factor among many in determining the value of a photograph, although there is still a preference for examples that most closely approach the photographer's original vision or intent. The evaluation of art photography from the early- to mid-twentieth century follows a similar logic, albeit with a different set of circumstances and considerations, as outlined in my earlier examination of Richard Blodgett's 1979 collecting guide.²⁹⁸ Contemporary work by active, often younger, photographers is different yet again, but Lunn still relates much of its value to relative rarity. Overall, though, he spends the least amount of time considering the contemporary market, and one senses that he considered it rather outside of his purview.

²⁹⁷ Undated typescript, box 181, folder 12, Harry Lunn Papers.

²⁹⁸ Another discussion of Lunn's hierarchies of value, along with those of other dealers and curators, may be found in Quasha, "The Same Image—Dramatically Different Print Prices."

Contemporary Photography in the 1970s

The hierarchies that Lunn created for historical photographs, including modernist photographs from the early twentieth century, seem, at least on the surface, largely irrelevant to much of the contemporary photographic work being made in the 1970s. One of the great ironies of the photo boom is that this brand new market was largely predicated on a set of values and assumptions that were, at just that moment, coming under enormous pressure from artists, scholars, and critics. At the same time that the history of photography was being formalized as a scholarly field, a growing contingent of practitioners was using photography for reasons and in ways that had nothing to do with the standards so recently established, and with little regard for the historical legacy of the medium. Contemporary photography by the end of the 1970s was, in fact, a collection of wildly disparate practices, the majority of which did not fit within the parameters laid down by the first generation of photography dealers and scholars. Indeed the variety and breadth of this work is too vast to examine in detail here, but it is worth considering briefly in its broadest outlines.

Many older photographers continued to make fine black and white, gelatin silver prints that essentially carried on the tradition of straight photography, and many emerging photographers followed in their footsteps. Ansel Adams, still a lodestar for the market, reached a pinnacle of fame in the 1970s, even appearing on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1979. [Figure 35] There was still a large and active community of photographers who, although diverse in subject matter and style, generally hewed to a similar emphasis on painstaking darkroom work and a modernist belief in camera vision and expressive imagery. Imogen Cunningham, Aaron Siskind, Harry Callahan, Barbara Crane, Paul Caponigro, Jerry Uelsmann, Lee Friedlander, Elliott Erwitt, and Emmet Gowin, to cite just a cursory handful, might all be placed in the same capacious category,

despite the fact that they came from different generations and pursued different aesthetic and conceptual goals. [Figure 36] Other photographers, including Eliot Porter, William Eggleston, and Stephen Shore, might also be placed within the same broadly recognizable photographic tradition, even while working with color film, a medium that had been considered crassly commercial not long before. [Figure 37]

The 1970s were also a period of great technical and material experimentation in photography, exemplified as early as 1970 by Peter Bunnell's *Photography Into Sculpture* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art.²⁹⁹ Clustered around different geographic and pedagogical hubs across the United States, a cadre of somewhat younger artists including Robert Heinecken, Joan Lyons, Tom Barrow, Keith Smith, Betty Hahn, William Larson, Bea Nettles, and many others used photography as just one component of works that incorporated painting, printmaking, collage, non-silver processes both historical and commercial, and all manner of three-dimensional forms, such as books, textiles, and sculpture. [Figure 38] Many of these artists, despite their irreverent use of the medium, nonetheless often worked within specifically photographic milieux, even as they blurred the boundaries of what that meant. Heinecken, for example, was instrumental in establishing a photography department at UCLA in 1964, and taught there until 1991. Larson, Smith, and Barrow all studied photography with Aaron Siskind at the Institute of Design in Chicago in the 1960s.³⁰⁰ Betty Hahn learned from Henry Holmes Smith at Indiana University, and both she and Nettles taught in the photography department at the Rochester Institute of Technology. Hahn and Barrow also taught in the photography department at the University of New Mexico, and Barrow worked both as a curator and an assistant director at the George

²⁹⁹ Mary Statzer, *The Photographic Object 1970*.

³⁰⁰ Larson also studied with Harry Callahan during his time in Chicago, and Smith was a student of Arthur Siegel.

Eastman House. Larson, Lyons, Smith, Nettles, and Hahn were also all deeply involved in Rochester's Visual Studies Workshop, founded by Nathan Lyons. These artists represented an active strain in photographic practice during the 1970s, and were fundamentally part of the larger photography community, particularly in terms of photographic education.³⁰¹ And yet their work was often commercially sidelined, all but ignored by dealers like Lunn. Harold Jones, who was himself affiliated with the Rochester scene from his time at the George Eastman House, did exhibit and sell many of these artists during his tenure at LIGHT Gallery, but for decades they were largely overshadowed by their more traditional contemporaries.³⁰²

The era was also a nexus for overlapping generations of conceptual artists who used photography in ways that emphasized many of the qualities that were anathema to proponents of photography-as-art. These artists were often interested precisely in photography's reproducible, commercial, and ostensibly anti-aesthetic qualities. Some, like Jan Dibbets, John Baldessari, Dennis Oppenheim, and Joseph Kosuth made work in the late 1960s that, as art historian Lucy Soutter has argued, were canny interrogations of the very nature of the photographic medium, even if these artists tended to cite painting as their primary point of departure. [Figure 39] Others, like Robert Smithson and Douglas Huebler, whose modes of artistic production were often ephemeral or geographically difficult to access, turned to photography for its utility in documenting these elusive artworks. [Figure 40] At the same time, art historian Heather Diack

³⁰¹ For more about photographic education during this period, and especially the important social networks among photographers across the US and Canada, see Ben-Choreen, "The Institutionalization of Creative Photography's Higher Education."

³⁰² McDonald, "Centralizing Rochester," 199. Jones first came to Eastman House as an intern, and eventually returned for a short stint as a curator before leaving to become the first director of LIGHT in 1971. He held that position until his relocation to Tucson, where he was the founding director of the Center for Creative Photography and helped to establish the graduate program in photography at the University of Arizona.

has written convincingly about conceptual artists' attempts to complicate commonly held beliefs in photography's objectivity or "truth value."³⁰³

While some of these artists were explicitly interested in opposing the forces of commodification, others, like Bruce Nauman, made aesthetically considered exhibition photographs as well. The end of the 1970s also saw the emergence of the loosely affiliated group of artists known broadly as the Pictures Generation, which included Troy Brauntuch, Jack Goldstein, Philip Smith, Sherrie Levine, Robert Longo, Cindy Sherman, Richard Prince, and Sarah Charlesworth, among others.³⁰⁴ Many of these young artists either appropriated existing photographs—whether from commercial or "fine art" sources—or used the medium in ways that drew attention to its inescapable imbrication with mass media and the machinations of capitalism. [Figure 41] Somewhat later, in 1988, during the last of *The Print Collector's Newsletter* roundtables, artist Sarah Charlesworth speaks extensively about the schism between contemporary artists' use of photography and the medium's traditional legacy. She asserts that her use of photography, and that of her peers, is less concerned with the medium per se, and more with its function as a social language. "I wasn't particularly interested in photography," she says of her own work, and notes that "there have been assumptions—at least in 20th-century photography—as to what *photography* really is, and it's a very purist tradition that's being challenged."³⁰⁵

³⁰³ Heather Diack, *Documents of Doubt: The Photographic Conditions of Conceptual Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020).

³⁰⁴ The moniker stemmed from the now-famous exhibition curated by Douglas Crimp at Artists Space in New York in 1977. See Douglas Crimp, "Pictures," *Artists Space*, 1977; "Pictures," *October* 8 (1979): 75–88; Douglas Eklund, *The Pictures Generation, 1974–1984* (New York; New Haven: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Yale University Press, 2009).

³⁰⁵ Bunnell et al., "Photographs & Professionals IV," 81.

In other words, by the time that participants in the early photography market were rallying around the notion of photographs' valuable material qualities and the primacy of the photographer's original vision, many artists who used photography did so with little regard for the strictures of fine printing or for the medium's newly standardized history. Furthermore, important contingents of the art world were moving away from the traditional gallery space and the hand-made object altogether, and attempting to divest art of its elitist and auratic qualities. Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, who memorably explored the idea of "dematerialization" in conceptual art, make these goals explicit. They write that "the shift of emphasis from art as product to art as idea has freed the artist from present limitations—both economic and technical. [...] Moreover, since dealers cannot sell art-as-idea, economic materialism is denied along with physical materialism."³⁰⁶

More recently, however, scholars have sought to complicate this notion of dematerialization, including its particular valences for conceptual artists using photography and its relationship to the art market. Lucy Soutter, for example, has argued that the disinterest in photography avowed by many conceptual artists should not be taken at face value. Artists like Dibbetts and Baldessari, she writes, "created work in which the idea and its specific material instantiation are both photographic. In other words, these pieces direct their conceptual interrogation towards photography as a medium; they question what a photograph is and does."³⁰⁷ Elsewhere, she has pointed out that even an apparent *lack* of photographic style, the very banality of the images found in conceptual work is itself a deliberate aesthetic choice, even if it was primarily meant to

³⁰⁶ Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, "The Dematerialization of Art," *Art International* 12, no. 2 (February 1968): 34.

³⁰⁷ Lucy Soutter, "The Photographic Idea: Reconsidering Conceptual Photography," *Afterimage* 26, no. 5 (April 1999): 8.

signal the artists' stance against modernist formalism.³⁰⁸ Rachel Vogel, meanwhile, is reconsidering conceptual art's relationship to commodity, exploring the ways that artists like Douglas Huebler made work that explicitly grappled with questions of rarity and commercial value within the context of the art market.³⁰⁹

With the clarity of hindsight, it is also evident that many of the highest-profile artists from this period, even if they ostensibly resisted the forces of the art market at the time, have gone on to become commercial best-sellers in the decades since.³¹⁰ Denise Bethel has written bemusedly, in the third person, of her own experience seeing an *Untitled Film Still* [Figure 42] when it arrived on consignment at Sotheby's in the mid-1980s:

What is this? the photo auctioneer asked when she saw her first Cindy Sherman in the flesh. She'd seen them in books, in magazines, but never in the flesh. *This isn't it, is it?* she said, turning the ordinary 8-by-10 inch black-and-white over in her hands. It was positively anti-monumental. *This must be a copy print. They'll probably send us the real thing later.*

Her colleague examined it. *I don't know. It doesn't look like a copy print.*

But look at this paper. This couldn't really be it, could it?

I think this is it, her colleague said with a sigh. *I think this is the way it's supposed to look.*³¹¹

Later, in 2011, Sherman's *Untitled #96* (1981) sold for \$3,890,500 at Christie's, not only setting a record for the artist herself, but briefly becoming the most expensive photograph ever sold at

³⁰⁸ Lucy Soutter, "Expanding Photography Circa 1970: Photographic Objects and Conceptual Art," in *The Photographic Object 1970*, 71. See also Matthew S. Witkovsky, Mark Godfrey, and Art Institute of Chicago, eds., *Light Years: Conceptual Art and the Photograph, 1964–1977* (Chicago; New Haven: Art Institute of Chicago; Distributed by Yale University Press, 2011), 17.

³⁰⁹ Rachel Vogel, "The Machine That Makes the Art: Printmaking and Conceptual Art, 1965–1975," (PhD diss., Harvard University). Vogel's dissertation is still in process at the time of this writing.

³¹⁰ For an overview and contextualization of forty-one of the most expensive photographs ever sold at auction, see Robyn S. Zolnai, "Million Dollar Babies: Identifying And Analyzing Million Dollar Photographs Sold At Auction From 2005 Until 2011" (MA thesis, Ryerson University, 2012).

³¹¹ Denise Bethel, "Cindy and Me: Notes for an Auctioneer's Memoir," *21st: The Journal of Contemporary Photography Culture & Criticism* 1 (1999): 179.

auction.³¹² [Figure 43] What is important to note, however, is the difference in setting and context. When Bethel encountered her first Sherman photograph at Sotheby's, she did so as a photography auctioneer, steeped in the traditional values of the medium. When *Untitled #96* sold for close to four million dollars almost three decades later, it was part of a sale of contemporary art. The provenance of the photograph itself indicates that it was originally purchased from Sherman's gallery at the time, Metro Pictures, which also specialized in contemporary art, not specifically in photography. While Lucy Soutter and others have convincingly complicated the rigid distinction between fine art photography and conceptual art during the 1960s and 1970s, the reality on the ground was that there was little overlap between these worlds, at least in terms of the market. Dealers like Harry Lunn took relatively little interest in contemporary photography, especially when it operated outside of more traditional approaches. I don't want to imply that photography dealers and scholars during the photo boom didn't care about conceptual work, or weren't curious about it. But even the more conceptually-minded darkroom photographers of the period tended to gravitate toward contemporary art galleries, rather than seeking representation with the new crop of medium-specific institutions and dealers. Lewis Baltz and Robert Adams, for example, along with Ralph Gibson, Eve Sonneman, and others, were represented by Castelli Graphics, a print-focused subsidiary of the esteemed Leo Castelli Gallery. The photography program at Castelli Graphics was headed from 1975–1982 by Marvin Heiferman, formerly of LIGHT Gallery. Heiferman has even stated that when he first arrived at Castelli, some of the photographers in the gallery's stable regarded him with suspicion because of his previous

³¹² *Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale* (New York: Christie's, May 11, 2011), lot 6, <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-5437823>. Andreas Gursky's *Rhein II* (1999) surpassed Sherman's later the same year, selling for \$4,338,500, also at Christie's. *Post-War and Contemporary Art Evening Sale* (New York: Christie's, November 7, 2011), lot 44, <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-5496716>.

involvement with LIGHT, which they saw as more traditional and provincial.³¹³ Essentially, many of the values set in place by Lunn and his colleagues, including the concept of vintage prints, were fundamental for establishing a thriving market for historical and modernist photography, but in some ways were rendered immediately moot by changes in the art world as a whole. Other practices, however, including the adoption of limited editions, had much wider significance outside of the insular fine art photography market. I will be discussing this practice in greater depth in my final chapter.

What *Vintage* Leaves Out

Even within the photography market, which in a sense was rendered “traditional” even while it was brand new, concepts like *vintage* and the rubrics laid out by Harry Lunn clearly prioritized not only a certain kind of photography, but a certain kind of photographic object. As early as 1980, A. D. Coleman wrote incisively about exactly this issue. In Part II of his series on collecting photographs, published in *Camera 35*, Coleman states his case against the market’s devotion to original photographic prints:

Though they are not necessarily the most essential aspect of a photographer’s output, prints are receiving the greatest emphasis in the current photography boom, and tend to be the most expensive form in which to acquire a photographer’s work. A combination of greed, insensitivity, and ignorance have conspired to place the accent on prints and to discount, comparatively, every other vehicle for imagery as “ephemeral.” This stems from a misguided attempt to mold photography into the shape of the other graphic arts, which would simplify and standardize the merchandizing and collecting of photographic images.³¹⁴

Coleman uses Edward Weston and Weegee as two contrasting case studies to illustrate his point. Weston, he notes, was a photographer singularly dedicated to fine printing, and thus it makes

³¹³ Marvin Heiferman, conversation with the author, June 5, 2019.

³¹⁴ A. D. Coleman, “Collecting Photographs, Part II: What’s the Photographer’s Vehicle?,” *Camera 35* 25, no. 4 (April 1980): 18.

sense to collect his original prints—and especially vintage prints made by the photographer himself—as the most fully realized instantiation of his work. [Figure 44] For Weegee, on the other hand, prints were essentially by-products; his photographs were always intended for the printed page, whether in newspapers or books. [Figure 45] In this case, although the market (at least in 1980) might dismiss these formats as relatively worthless, it is the newspaper and the mass-market book that best exemplifies Weegee’s own vision and intent for his imagery. Even photographers like Robert Frank and Ralph Gibson, he continues, are best understood through their carefully sequenced and printed books, rather than by their stand-alone gelatin silver prints, and thus the canny collector should prefer the former to the latter, despite the dictates of the market. Coleman’s essay is a compelling exposure of some of the weaknesses of hierarchies like those promulgated by Lunn and other dealers at the height of the photo boom. He revisited the topic twenty years later in another series of articles published in *Art on Paper*, in which he specifically delves into the shortcomings of *vintage* as a guiding principle for photography collectors.³¹⁵ He discusses ways in which the term itself can be misleading—noting that, for example, in the nineteenth-century many prints were not in fact made by the same photographers who made the negative—as well as instances in which non-vintage prints might be preferable, depending both on the artist in question and the particular interests of the collector. He even specifically refers to *vintage* as “a classic instance of collecting policies drawn from the other graphic arts being applied inappropriately to photography.”³¹⁶

Coleman’s reasoning has in some ways proven prescient for both the photography market and for the history of photography as a broader field of study. While it might have seemed a

³¹⁵ A. D. Coleman, “Photography as Material Culture: What Are the Vintage Years?,” *Art on Paper* 5, no. 2 (December 2000): 56–60. *Art on Paper* was the later iteration of *The Print Collector’s Newsletter*, re-named after Jacqueline Brody’s departure.

³¹⁶ Coleman, “What Are the Vintage Years?,” 59.

provocative stance in 1980 to argue that seeking out a first edition of *The Americans* was preferable to obtaining one of Frank's gelatin silver prints, in recent decades the market for important photobooks has expanded exponentially. At the same time, *vintage* has arguably remained as significant as ever, especially as fine examples of historical works have grown ever more scarce. Both exquisite vintage Weston prints and dog-eared Weegee prints remain relatively hot commodities, although both pale in comparison to monumental prints by Cindy Sherman or Andreas Gursky. In both academic and collecting circles, however, there have been numerous moves to broaden the scope of what is considered part of photography's history—what is worth studying and what is worth exhibiting and collecting. Scholars like Geoffrey Batchen, among others, have made compelling arguments for the importance of vernacular photographs, despite (or indeed because of) their purported banality and abundance.³¹⁷ While both private individuals and public institutions have collected certain kinds of rare vernacular material such as daguerreotypes since the early years of the photo boom, and even before, many are also now collecting more prosaic examples, including family albums, photobooth pictures, mugshots, stereo views, press prints, and anonymous cartes de visites. Many of these, in one sense, might be considered vintage, since they are technically “original” and of their time. But in other ways such objects complicate traditional notions of authorship and artistic intent, and are instead prized for what they tell us about photography's larger place in the world—in domestic life, identity, leisure, politics, surveillance—outside of its narrow function as a medium for making art. This broadening of histories of photography has been an important and evolving effort since the 1970s, and has often been staged in opposition to the values set in place during that decade.

³¹⁷ See for example Geoffrey Batchen, “Vernacular Photographies,” *History of Photography* 24, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 262–71; “Snapshots: Art History and the Ethnographic Turn,” *Photographies* 1, no. 2 (September 2008): 121–42. Catherine Zuromskis, *Snapshot Photography: The Lives of Images* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2013).

Hierarchies of rarity and value have had a major effect on the kind of photography that people and institutions collect, and this was especially true when the field was new and uncharted. Concepts like *vintage* gave dealers and collectors a kind of grounding, and allowed the field to gain a foothold that had previously proven elusive. As I will explore in the next chapter, these ideals also had some ramifications that we might not expect, including the establishment of photographic conservation as a professional field, and some of the first significant forgeries of historical photographs.

CHAPTER THREE: PRESERVING THE ORIGINAL, FAKING THE ORIGINAL

The specific new category of photograph, the vintage print, is thus incontrovertibly a product of the 1970s photography market. It represented a way of assigning historical and aesthetic value in a medium defined by its reproducibility and sometimes scorned for its supposedly mechanical nature. In this way, the term was a pendant to the debates around originality that marked the graphics boom a decade earlier. During that period, pioneers including print publishers June Wayne and Tatyana Grosman, and organizations like the Print Council of America, struggled to justify prints as expressive and valuable works of art on par with any other medium, despite the fact that they were made with a machine, in comparatively large numbers. Their collective solution—its evolution and variability notwithstanding—hinged on the premise that prints, like paintings or sculptures, were in fact both autographic and original. Printmaking had its own vocabulary and its own unique materiality, they insisted. Far from being an automated medium, it was highly specialized and required extraordinary sensitivity and skill. Pushing this point further, the Print Council made it their mission to regulate the slippery boundaries between original prints and mere reproductions.

In the 1970s, dealers, auctioneers, curators, collectors, and other participants in the new market for photographs similarly worked to establish a public understanding of—and a vocabulary for—photographs as original art objects worthy of being bought and sold, collected and exhibited. We have just seen how their efforts were amplified in the media and in specialized publications, and how a growing body of expertise contributed to a greater appreciation for photography, and to a corresponding rise in its status as a commodity. The establishment and expansion of the photography market was intrinsically related to other areas of institutional development, including the proliferation of photographic education and of dedicated museum

departments.³¹⁸ But it also reverberated in other ways that have not been often remarked upon, or that have not been directly linked to the advent of the market. In this chapter I will examine both the professionalization of photograph conservation and some of the earliest appearances of photographic forgery as outgrowths of the 1970s photo boom. Specifically, I will relate both of these developments to dealers', collectors', and scholars' emphasis on and expertise in photography's materiality, and their literal investment in how photographic objects are made. This interest in photographic materials—how they look, how they have been used, and even how they age—was key for the advent of both photograph conservation and forgery.

Although photograph conservation might seem on its face to be worlds away from the commercial concerns from the market, the fact that they emerged at precisely the same time is anything but a coincidence. The market is predicated on the understanding of photographs as irreplaceable originals, each freighted with its own material history and unique value. Given these assumptions, which have in turn informed both private and institutional collecting practices, it becomes clear that such historically and monetarily valuable objects must therefore be appropriately cared for and preserved. Preservation and conservation only make sense if one assumes that a photograph cannot simply be reprinted or swapped out for another version of the same image. Meanwhile, the hierarchy of value that placed a premium on some kinds of photographic objects and not others also opened the door to photographic forgery—the creation of ersatz vintage prints specifically intended to deceive—and the skyrocketing prices of the mid-1970s made such deception tempting for the first time. Both photograph conservation and forgery are based on the same foundational idea of authenticity, and both rest on a highly specific understanding of what comprises value, whether in the market or in historical or cultural terms.

³¹⁸ See for example Ben-Choreen, “The Institutionalization of Creative Photography’s Higher Education.”

Not all photographs are considered worthy of saving, and certainly not all are worth the effort of faking. By tracing the roots of these two different but interconnected strains of photographic practice, I will explore some of the underlying assumptions and desires of the early market, and point to ways that such values have continued to shape the photography ecosystem even today.

Photography's Materials

Before turning to the specific questions of conservation and forgery, it is worth spending some time considering photographic materiality as it relates to connoisseurship, rarity, and the assignation of value to different kinds of prints. Peter Bunnell's articles from the turn of the 1970s took up the notion of the "original print" to make a case for photography's validity and desirability as a collectible. He described photographs as expressive, handmade objects of varying quality (and qualities), distinct from the photographic images reproduced *en masse* in newspapers, magazines, and books. At this early stage, Bunnell did not directly employ the word *vintage*, but he did make an argument that equated "first" and "original," a point that was repeated in later texts, including collecting guides. "For example," Bunnell wrote in 1971,

a modern silver print made from a negative taken in 1923, but originally conceived to be printed on platinum paper bears only a partial relationship to the original or first print. Platinum paper is no longer commercially available and this circumstance, quite outside the photographer's control, establishes a singular rarity for the first print. Conscientious collectors should first seek the 1923 print.³¹⁹

Appropriately, given the context of *The Print Collector's Newsletter*, Bunnell also compares versions of a photograph made at different times to states of an etching, in which the artist makes a series of proofs of successive iterations of a printing matrix before deciding upon a definitive

³¹⁹ Bunnell, "Observations on Collecting Photographs," 29. As cited earlier, the Dennises repeat this point in their collecting guide, published several years later.

version and printing the entire edition. Curator Weston Naef, then at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, made a similar point in his presentation at the *Collecting the Photograph* symposium organized by *Art in America* magazine, held in New York on September 20, 1975. This symposium was intended to spotlight photography's rising profile in the art market, as suggested by its prestigious sponsor, the upscale venue at Alice Tully Hall in Lincoln Center, and the rather steep \$50 ticket price. *Art in America* itself modestly touted the symposium as a "landmark event" aimed specifically at new collectors of photography seeking guidance and insight into the field.³²⁰ In addition to Naef, the presenters included curators Peter Bunnell, John Szarkowski, and John Bullard; educators Eugenia Parry Janis and Nathan Lyons; collector Sam Wagstaff; and dealer Harry Lunn.³²¹ But despite its lofty intentions and distinguished line-up, *Collecting the Photograph* was not, by most accounts, particularly well-received and has not been especially remarked in the decades since. The few published accounts of the proceedings were written primarily by members of the photography community, and, at least for those individuals, it seems to have been a resounding disappointment. The event was plagued by numerous logistical and technical difficulties, and the auditorium was reportedly only two-thirds full. A. D. Coleman characterized the proceedings as "boring and uninformative," and noted that many in the audience were infuriated by both the symposium's expense and its "irrelevance."³²² Writer and educator Charles Hagen noted that "at the end of the day many questions posed by the act of

³²⁰ Charles Hagen, "'Collecting the Photograph': Was It Worth It?," *Afterimage* 3, no. 4 (October 1975): 3.

³²¹ These classifications are somewhat reductive. Bunnell was an educator in addition to being a curator; Lyons was also a photographer and curator; and Wagstaff had formerly been a curator before turning to collecting.

³²² A. D. Coleman, "Where's the Money?," *Camera* 35 19, no. 10 (January 1976): 29, 66.

collecting photographs had not even been raised; others had been stated, but not discussed at all.”³²³

Naef’s talk at *Collecting The Photograph* was “The Message Old Master Prints Carry for Us When Looking at Photographs,” an apt title given the symposium’s target audience, who were presumed (perhaps erroneously) to be more familiar with traditional art history than with photography. The talk centered on standards for photograph connoisseurship, and, like Bunnell, Naef compared versions of a photograph to states of an etching.³²⁴ But there are key differences between reprints of a photograph and states of an Old Master print. In Bunnell’s example of an early platinum print and a later gelatin silver reprint, it is actually the photographer’s reliance on commercial products, rather than deliberate changes to the print matrix—here, the negative—that ultimately leads to the variability and rarity of certain kinds of prints. Photographers who create their negatives with a particular kind of paper or process in mind are liable to find themselves in thrall to the companies that make those products, many of which are subject to reformulation or even discontinuation in response to fluctuations in demand, stylistic trends, and the availability of raw materials. Platinum paper is, as Bunnell indicates, a useful case in point. Many photographers, particularly art photographers, in the early decades of the twentieth century relished the delicate tones and chemical stability of photographic paper made with platinum salts. [Figure 46] But its production was drastically curtailed with the advent of World War I as prices for platinum soared. Although a number of substitutions were introduced in the following years, commercial production of both platinum and palladium papers effectively ended with the 1937

³²³ Hagen, “‘Collecting the Photograph’: Was It Worth It?,” 4. In addition to Hagen and Coleman’s coverage of the symposium, see also Eleanor Fink, “Collecting the Photograph,” *ARLIS/NA Newsletter* 3, no. 6 (October 1975): 104–5; Hilton Kramer, “Photography: A Changing Scene,” *The New York Times*, December 7, 1975.

³²⁴ Fink, “Collecting the Photograph,” 104.

shuttering of the Platinotype Company.³²⁵ Some exceptionally talented printers have been able to recapture these processes' allure using modern versions of the original materials, but most connoisseurs and collectors would nonetheless prefer the earlier versions.³²⁶

Even gelatin silver, the workhorse photographic paper of the twentieth century, has been subject to significant changes in formulation and appearance. The introduction of the smooth baryta layer below the gelatin emulsion in the late nineteenth century, for example, and the advent of optical brightening agents in the mid-1950s, were major material changes to commercial photographic papers that resulted in significant differences in photographs' appearance.³²⁷ And indeed the presence of optical brighteners in purportedly vintage prints has proven to be a critical piece of evidence in rare but sensational examples of photographic forgery. Early twentieth-century sample books of gelatin silver papers offered by Kodak, Ilford, and other manufacturers, reveal a dizzying range of thicknesses, tonalities, textures, and gloss, most of which were eventually discontinued as the decades wore on.³²⁸ [Figure 47]

The historical variability in how photographs look, then, often has as much to do with the vagaries of industrial production and advances in technology as with the evolution of style or aesthetics. Certainly there have been artists, even whole photographic movements, who

³²⁵ "Platinum Overview," Graphics Atlas, Image Permanence Institute, accessed December 7, 2020. http://www.graphicsatlas.org/identification/?process_id=271.

³²⁶ One such example is George Tice, who made modern palladium prints of Edward Weston's celebrated photographs of his son Neil. See Edward Weston, "Six Nudes of Neil," printed by George Tice (New York: Witkin Gallery, 1977). An interesting counter-example can be found in the portfolio *Charles Sheeler: Photographer at The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, produced in 1982 by the museum, which retains a mock-up of the project in its collection (the full edition of 250 was apparently never completed), accession number 1982.1189. The exquisite prints in this portfolio were made by Alan B. Newman on hand-coated platinum paper, chosen to best replicate Sheeler's original gelatin silver prints, a decision outlined in the portfolio's introductory text by Weston Naef.

³²⁷ Gawain Weaver, *A Guide to Fiber-Base Gelatin Silver Print Condition and Deterioration* (Rochester, NY: George Eastman House; Image Permanence Institute, Rochester Institute of Technology, 2008): 6.

³²⁸ Weaver, *Gelatin Silver Print Condition*, 6. Weaver identifies the 1930s as the peak of available finishes for commercial photographic papers, after which point many variants were discontinued and papers overall became more uniform in appearance.

purposely emphasized the handmade, one-of-a-kind print. We can think of the Photo-Secessionists of the early twentieth century [Figure 48], as well as later artists such as Bea Nettles, Betty Hahn, and Robert Heinecken, all of whom incorporated hand-manipulation, diverse media, and unusual formats in their photographic work. [Figure 49] In these instances, the material singularity of each print is obvious and deliberate. But if we focus on more traditional “straight” photography, then it seems that differences between prints, particularly earlier and later prints, more often rests, as Bunnell puts it, “quite outside the photographer’s control.” In the historical window after the rise of ink-based photomechanical reproduction, and before the emergence of a full-blown market for photography, most photographers were liable to make very few prints from a given negative. In some cases, photographers were simply more interested in taking new pictures than in laboring in the darkroom.³²⁹ In other instances, as much as they might have liked to make more prints, the cost and the lack of demand were prohibitive. Edward Weston, writing in his daybooks in 1924, actually bemoaned how few prints he was able to make of his Mexican photographs:

Most of the prints from negatives made with direct creative intent are the result of but little experimenting; usually two or three prints suffice. Or rather I should say that because of the cost I can afford to make but few prints, sometimes but one—and of course I am not always entirely happy. “If I could only use one more sheet of paper,” I say to myself, and then stoically, though regretfully, seal the can of palladiotype, promising myself to someday reprint all my favorite negatives.³³⁰

Weston did eventually return to his negatives, most notably with the 1952 publication of his *50th Anniversary Portfolio*, a selection of twelve of his most iconic images, printed in an edition of 100; and the ambitious Project Prints, made between 1952 and 1955, comprising prints of 832 of

³²⁹ This point has been made by a number of observers, including Homer, “On the Connoisseurship of Photographs,” 137; Witkin and London, *The Photograph Collector’s Guide*, 10.

³³⁰ Edward Weston and Nancy Wynne Newhall, *The Daybooks of Edward Weston*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (New York: Aperture, 1990), 91.

his negatives, and intended to be published in an edition of 10.³³¹ However, neither of these projects were printed by Weston himself, who by this time was incapacitated by Parkinson's Disease. Rather, his sons Brett and Cole took over the printing, and continued to do so long after the elder Weston's death in 1958. Thus the span of years, or even decades, between the date of the negative and the date of the reprint meant not only that Weston's materials had inevitably changed, but that the person making the prints had changed too. Indeed, the difference in aesthetic and monetary value accorded to early Edward Weston prints versus later prints made by Cole Weston is a frequently cited and debated example in discussions of *vintage* and photographic rarity.³³²

Although Cole Weston began printing his father's work as early as the 1950s, the sudden explosion in demand ushered in by the photo boom ultimately compelled many older photographers to begin reprinting their earlier images. And again, there were major differences between the prints they were able to make for the new dealers and collectors, and those they had made years before. In some instances this had to do with the photographers themselves, and changes in their own stylistic impulses. Ansel Adams³³³ and Bill Brandt³³⁴ are both prominent

³³¹ Amy Conger, *Edward Weston: Photographs from the Collection of the Center for Creative Photography* (Tucson, AZ: Center for Creative Photography, 1992), 43.

³³² To cite just a few examples, see Bunnell, "Diane Arbus," 130; Schad, "Shooting from the Hip," 219; Alexandra Peers, "Collectors Looking for Valuable Photographs Should Consider the Market's Negatives," *Wall Street Journal, Europe*, October 11, 1991; Stephen Perloff, "Image Is Everything: A Great One Can Cost You the Whole Blooming Farm or Just a Little Bit of the Green Stuff," *Inside*, September 30, 2001.

³³³ Adams in his older age sought to imbue his prints with "maximum impact—greater and greater depth of tone and strength of contrast, and larger scale of monumentality of effect." Nicolai Cikovsky, Jr., "Notes on the Museum Set," in *Ansel Adams: Classic Images: The Museum Set* (Boston: New York Graphic Society; Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1985), 29. Laurie Taylor has also written specifically about Ansel Adams's experiments with print *scale*, especially his oversized mural prints. Laurie Taylor, "The Big Picture: The Materiality of Size in Ansel Adams's Large-Scale Works," *History of Photography* 43, no. 4 (2019): 380–98; *The Materiality of Exhibition Photography in the Modernist Era: Form, Content, Consequence* (New York: Routledge, 2021).

³³⁴ In a 2013 catalogue essay, Sarah Hermanson Meister returns several times to Brandt's printing and retouching techniques, which were meticulous and also varied radically throughout his career, to the

examples of photographers who are well known to have changed their printing style over the course of their careers. [Figure 50] Other photographers hired assistants to print for them, albeit sometimes under varying degrees of supervision. In addition, this period saw numerous reprints from the negatives of deceased photographers, with greater or lesser degrees of sensitivity. The large gelatin silver prints published in a posthumous 1975 portfolio of the modernist Czech photographer František Drtikol, for example, bear little resemblance to the artist's lush pigment prints from the 1920s and 1930s.³³⁵ [Figure 51] But even in cases where photographers might wish to reproduce the look of their own earlier work, changes to commercially available materials have often made this impossible. In short, changes in photographic materials at the level of industrial production belong to an entirely different category than a traditional printer's conscious and systematic manipulation of an etching plate or lithographic stone as part of an iterative creative process. Again, while some photographers have purposely altered the way they print or have experimented with different materials or different ways of cropping their images, many have simply had to shift their practice in response to changes in printing papers and photographic chemicals.

There is also the faultiness of the comparison between a photographic negative and a printing matrix. One of the fundamental reasons for valuing the earliest examples of traditional prints is

extent that "it is rare to find two prints presented in an identical manner." She also suggests that the prints he made specifically for sale at the Marlborough Gallery in the 1970s are "arguably Brandt's least inspiring prints, with a production-line uniformity to them." Sarah Hermanson Meister, "Shadow and Light: The Life and Art of Bill Brandt," in *Bill Brandt: Shadow and Light* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2013), 12. For more on Brandt and Marlborough, see Audrey Sands, "Photography at Marlborough Gallery," in *Bill Brandt / Henry Moore* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020), 114–15.

³³⁵ *Drtikol* (Rochester, NY: George Eastman House, 1975). The portfolio was produced in an unnumbered edition of 100, and was printed by Eastman House staff photographer Gerry Dartt from a selection of Drtikol's original glass negatives, held in the museum's collection. In the example shown in Figure 49, it is especially striking that the two versions—Drtikol's own print, and the posthumous portfolio print—are laterally reversed. Drtikol often printed his negatives as pigment prints, which results in a reversed image. Dartt's gelatin silver prints do not replicate this reversal.

the fact that an etching plate or a wood block, for example, physically wears down over time. As a result, the first prints possess a crispness and level of detail that gradually softens and erodes as additional prints are pulled. A 1970 exhibition pamphlet on the prints of Albrecht Dürer notes that “a great Dürer is an impression taken from a freshly executed plate or block in unworn and undamaged condition on a fine-quality paper.”³³⁶ Further, “one of the most crucial judgements one can make, especially with prints by Dürer, who coaxed every last possibility from the engraved line, concerns the freshness of the copperplate, or the amount of wear it has undergone.”³³⁷ Generally speaking, such considerations factor very little in photography. Barring any major deterioration resulting from poor processing or storage, a photographic negative can be used to make comparatively vast quantities of prints without any appreciable loss in image quality. Again, this is a property that has made the medium extremely useful in practical terms, but it is also a conundrum for the market. Effectively it means that, when it comes to image quality, later prints are not inherently inferior to early prints. But it also, as we have seen, introduces a level of anxiety among collectors who might prefer a built-in limit to how many examples of a work exist in the world. I will be returning to this point in my discussion of limited editions, but for now I want simply to stress that the nature of the photographic negative in some ways undermines the idea that the vintage print is inherently superior. At the very least, it significantly complicates any easy comparison between reprints of a photograph and states of an etching—or earlier or later prints in an edition—on the basis of image quality per se.

Vintage and the Passage of Time

³³⁶ Richard S. Field, *Albrecht Dürer 1471–1528: A Study Exhibition of Print Connoisseurship* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1970), 5.

³³⁷ Field, *Albrecht Dürer*, 8.

In addition to changes in the production of photographic materials, or in photographers' own practice, it is also critical to acknowledge that existing photographs themselves change with the passage of time. It is not only that a 1920 photographic paper is different from a 1970 photographic paper, it is that a photographic print from 1920 looks different in 1970 than it did when it was made. This seems on the face of it an obvious point, but it is worth examining. One of the chief arguments set forth for the value of vintage prints is that they most closely reflect the original intent of the photographer. Their aura, as we saw expounded in Arnold Crane's 1975 *New York Times* article, has much to do with the romantic attachment to the moment of creation, and with the creator's first ("original") vision for the work. And yet, perhaps equally as important are the marks of time that a photograph acquires over the course of its "life." Such marks can comprise both human-made augmentations such as inscriptions and other signifiers of provenance; and the physical, even chemical, changes that inevitably occur in the photograph itself.

Indeed, the German philosopher and critic Walter Benjamin points to precisely these attributes when he talks about the "unique existence" of a work of art, which "determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence. This includes the changes which it may have suffered in its physical condition over the years as well as the various changes in its ownership."³³⁸ But Benjamin is specifically talking about non-photographic art works. The concept of—and reverence for—the vintage print starting in the 1970s complicates his insistence that the aura of an artwork withers in the face of reproducibility, and that "to ask for the 'authentic' print makes no sense."³³⁹ It is the recognition of photographic materiality, and of the

³³⁸ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969): 220. Benjamin's essay was first published in French in 1936, and was not translated into English until the late 1960s.

³³⁹ Benjamin "The Work of Art," 224.

“substantive duration” of singular photographic prints, that engenders this contradiction.³⁴⁰

Indeed by the 1970s, and especially in the following decade, many scholars of photography had begun to wield Benjamin’s ideas specifically in opposition to the values espoused by the market and the museum. To cite just one example among many, in a 1981 conversation between scholar Abigail Solomon-Godeau and photography critic Ben Lifson, published in *October* magazine, Solomon-Godeau makes this explicit:

For me the question is whether the distinction between an artist’s own print and a sensitive facsimile is real or artificial, whether it is an essential distinction or one which is borrowed from the connoisseurship of earlier forms of reproducible art. Walter Benjamin said that there is a *fundamental* difference between photography and earlier forms, and I think the rejection of this insight—no, the suppression of it—is the single greatest fallacy in the discourse of photography today. Nobody wants to hear that photography has no aura, because all the current trade in photographs needs that aura to make good its claims. What’s really at stake now is the transmutation of discourse value to commodity value.³⁴¹

Solomon-Godeau’s argument leaves little room for nuance, but certainly underscores a lasting rupture between the priorities of the market and its attendant institutions, and a strong strain of academic thinking, much of it rooted in Benjamin’s sense of photography and film as fundamentally radical media. Interestingly, by contrast, Susan Sontag, despite the fact that she herself rarely seemed to base her analyses of photography on original prints, found fault with Benjamin’s premise. In “Photographic Evangelists,” the fifth chapter of her 1977 landmark *On Photography*, she writes,

Another quality [photography and painting] can share is the quality of presence, which Walter Benjamin considered the defining characteristic of a work of art. Benjamin thought that a photograph, being a mechanically reproduced object, could not have genuine presence. It could be argued, however, that the very situation which is now determinative of taste in photography, its exhibition in museums and galleries, has revealed that photographs do possess a kind of authenticity. Furthermore, although no photograph is original in the sense that a painting always is, there is a large qualitative difference between what could be called originals—prints made from the original negative at the time (that is, at the same moment in

³⁴⁰ Benjamin “The Work of Art,” 221.

³⁴¹ Ben Lifson and Abigail Solomon-Godeau, “Photophilia: A Conversation about the Photography Scene,” *October* 16 (1981): 118. Italics in the original.

the technological evolution of photography) that the picture was taken—and subsequent generations of the same photograph. (What most people know of the famous photographs—in books, newspapers, magazines, and so forth—are photographs of photographs; the originals, which one is likely to see in a museum or gallery, offer visual pleasures which are not reproducible.)³⁴²

It is striking here that Sontag seems to have absorbed the idea of the vintage print and used a practically textbook definition in her rejoinder to Benjamin's famous essay. In fact, Harry Lunn was so taken with this particular passage from Sontag that he typed it out and used it as the basis for a short lecture, apparently the one he gave at the 1978 "Photographic Collecting, Past and Present, in the United States, Canada and Europe" symposium at the George Eastman House.³⁴³ Not incidentally, this was the symposium that directly catalyzed the formation of the Association of International Photography Art Dealers (AIPAD) the following year. Lunn muses in his talk that this "quality of presence" has not only to do with the physicality of a photograph, but with its psychological, tactile, emotional, and historical presence. I would argue that the tandem emergence of the market for photographs and the history of photography as a field of study reinforced the notion that there was value—aesthetic, pecuniary, and scholarly—in a photographic print that had moved through time; value that was comparatively lacking in a new print made years after the negative. And although scholars like Solomon-Godeau and others have asserted that photography's entry into the hallowed space of the museum purely constitutes a kind of de-historicization, it also signaled the medium's first emergence as a legitimate object of

³⁴² Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1977), 124. This essay, actually a review of John Szarkowski's *Looking at Photographs: 100 Pictures from the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art*, was first published as "Photography In Search of Itself," *The New York Review of Books* 23, nos. 21 & 22 (January 20, 1977): 53–59.

³⁴³ Undated manuscript and typescript, series VII, box 181, folder 12, Harry Lunn Papers, 004.M.17, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California. Lunn also used Sontag's evocative phrase "the quality of presence" as the title of an exhibition and catalogue. Lunn Gallery, *The Quality of Presence* (Washington, DC: Graphics International Ltd., 1978).

study.³⁴⁴ Without this initial stamp of legitimacy, narrow though it may have been, there arguably would have been no field for later scholars to build upon and critique.

In his 1987 article, “The Aesthetic of the Antique,” historian Leon Rosenstein posits that “all antiques, we should say, should *show their age*.” He refers to the “material or corporeal aspect of agedness” that both increases the “aesthetic appeal” of an object, and also “denotes the object’s historicity,” making it legible as an antique.³⁴⁵ The fact of photographs’ corporeality, the idea that as objects they have, in Rosenstein’s words, a “life-world which [they have] lived through” is indeed the basis for a rich vein of scholarship that uses anthropology and material culture studies to approach the history of photography.³⁴⁶ But this “life-world” has also been integral to appreciating vintage prints in the context of the market, sometimes in fraught or contradictory ways. Conservator Gawain Weaver has written explicitly about the potential market value of chemical aging in photographs. “While the aging of a [photographic] print is certainly a sign of decay,” he writes, “the line between deterioration and patina, within fine art photography, is drawn by aesthetics rather than science.”³⁴⁷ Signs of chemical deterioration such as silver mirroring or the yellowing (or “warming”) of image tones—both resulting from silver oxidation in the photographic paper—are ultimately detrimental to the longevity of a photograph. At the same time, they may be said connote authenticity in a vintage print, and to add an element of charm or beauty, provided they are not so far advanced as to detract from the image. Weaver

³⁴⁴ See for example Allan Sekula, “Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation),” *The Massachusetts Review* 19, no. 4 (1978): 859–83; Rosalind Krauss, “Photography’s Discursive Spaces: Landscape/View,” *Art Journal* 42, no. 4 (1982): 311–19; Douglas Crimp, “The Museum’s Old/The Library’s New Subject,” *Parachute*, spring 1981, 33–37.

³⁴⁵ Leon Rosenstein, “The Aesthetic of the Antique,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 45, no. 4 (1987): 399. Italics in the original.

³⁴⁶ Rosenstein, “The Aesthetic of the Antique,” 400. See for example Elizabeth Edwards, “Material Beings: Objecthood and Ethnographic Photographs,” *Visual Studies* 17, no. 1 (2002): 67–75.

³⁴⁷ Weaver, *Fiber-Base Gelatin Silver Print Condition and Deterioration*, 18.

even notes that some amount of mirroring and warming of image tones can be said to create a “classic vintage print aesthetic” that collectors may find desirable.³⁴⁸ Indeed, he points to a well-known instance in which silver mirroring was *removed* from a vintage Edward Weston print, which presumably helped to stabilize the print but may have contributed to its failure to sell at a 2004 auction.³⁴⁹ The aesthetic appeal of some kinds, and degrees, of photographic deterioration, however, in turn complicates the claim that the value of *vintage* is predicated on original intent. Presumably Edward Weston did not intend for his photographs to mirror, as most other photographers do not intend for theirs to yellow or fade. And so the appeal of a vintage photograph’s signs of age is complex, and often fluid. The beauty of “agedness” sometimes comes at the expense of fully experiencing a photographer’s original vision for their work, or understanding how a photograph might have been seen when it was new.

Furthermore, not all deterioration is considered equally appealing. Color photographs, for example, are notoriously fugitive, in ways that few connoisseurs value. The widespread fading and yellowing of chromogenic prints from the 1970s is almost universally considered a problem rather than a feature, one that both photographers and collectors have had to reckon with. This is one key instance in which a modern reprint has often been considered preferable to a vintage “original.” [Figure 52] Conservator Nora Kennedy has written about the complexities introduced by color photographic work, especially following the advent of conceptual art and even more recently with the rise of digital materials. She notes both the recent—and surprising—acceptance of visible deterioration in color photographs on one hand; and on the other, the capacity of contemporary photographic practice to “diminish the importance of the ‘unique

³⁴⁸ Weaver, 18.

³⁴⁹ Weaver, 19. Weaver is careful not to claim that the removal of silver mirroring definitely undermined the value of the Weston print. The photograph’s history at auction, however, suggests that this may have been a contributing factor.

original.”³⁵⁰ The inherent instability of nearly all color materials has compelled numerous institutions to develop a series of strategies for collecting, exhibiting, and even reprinting such work, including obtaining duplicate copies at the time of acquisition. (In this case, one print is exhibited, with the understanding that it will inevitably deteriorate, while the other is held in cold storage for safe-keeping.) Interestingly, such practices have themselves engendered a new array of specialized vocabularies, including terms such as *reserve print*, *master print*, *match print*, *collection print*, and *exhibition print*, all of which have particular roles in the long-term stewardship of color photography.³⁵¹ The particular approach taken by a given institution must, as Kennedy notes, remain flexible and responsive to the wishes of the artist whenever possible. In this sense, “original intent” takes on a new valence, especially in the case of living artists, and at times directly opposes the prevailing emphasis on the unique vintage print.

Caring for Vintage Prints

The imbrication of photographic materiality and the desires of the market can in fact be linked to the emergence of photograph conservation as a professional field, a development which squarely coincided with the 1970s photo boom. Conservator Peter Mustardo, in his invaluable paper on the history of photograph conservation, notes that although concern about photographic deterioration and preservation stretches back to the earliest decades of the medium, little effort was initially expended on actually treating or repairing existing prints. As an example, he points to the lack of such considerations in the findings of the storied nineteenth-century “Fading

³⁵⁰ Nora W. Kennedy, Meredith Reiss, and Katherine Sanderson, “The Future Is Not What It Used to Be: Changing Views on Contemporary Color Photography,” *Studies in Conservation* 61, no. sup2 (June 1, 2016): 91; Kennedy and Peter Mustardo, “Changing Perspectives on Color Photography,” in *ICOM Committee for Conservation, 15th Triennial Meeting, New Delhi*, ed. Janet Bridgland (New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata: Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 2008), 689–93.

³⁵¹ Kennedy, “The Future is Not What It Used to Be,” 94.

Committee,” published in the November 1855 issue of *The Journal of the Photographic Society*, noting that “there was arguably no reason to ‘treat’ a paper photograph itself.” He continues,

If the negative was available, then the logical solution would be simply to make another print from that negative. The problem of a damaged paper print was just that easily resolved. The original print, considered to be without intrinsic value itself, allowed another photographic print to be considered just as good as, if not better than, the damaged one that it replaced. The fact of being “reproducible” or capable of being mechanically reproduced was applied to the photographic print and in fact held sway in the field for many years. This concept of the reproducibility of any photographic image contributed greatly to the delayed appearance of photograph conservation as a specific field of endeavor.³⁵²

According to Mustardo, it was not until the 1950s—a hundred years after the Fading Committee—that we find the first known conservation treatments of paper photographs (as opposed to daguerreotypes, for example, which are inherently singular). Tellingly, these treatments were carried out by Edward Steichen, then curator of photography at the Museum of Modern Art, and were conducted on prints by Alfred Stieglitz. “These prints by Stieglitz,” Mustardo points out, “were of very high intrinsic value as art objects and were not candidates for duplication.”³⁵³

And yet, despite the occasional intervention of this sort in the mid-twentieth century, the formal beginning of the professional field of photograph conservation is commonly traced only to the early 1970s.³⁵⁴ In 1971, José Orraca was hired as the first photograph conservator at the International Museum of Photography at the George Eastman House in Rochester. By the end of the decade, he had also established a training program in photograph conservation at the

³⁵² Peter Mustardo, “The Evolution of Photograph Conservation Treatment Over the Past Thirty-Five Years,” in *Conservación de Fotografías: Treinta Años de Ciencia: Conferencia Internacional Logroño 2011 = Conservation of Photographs; Thirty Years of Science: International Conference* (Pamplona: Conservación Acceso Archivos Patrimoniales [CAAP], 2016), 170.

³⁵³ Mustardo “Evolution of Photograph Conservation,” 172.

³⁵⁴ For further resources on this rich subject matter, see for example Debra Hess Norris and Jennifer Jae Gutierrez, *Issues in the Conservation of Photographs*, Readings in Conservation (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2010).

University of Delaware, as well as a Photographic Materials Group under the aegis of the American Institute for Conservation of Art and Historic Artifacts.³⁵⁵ In a 1974 talk given to the Society of American Archivists, Orraca outlined a set of guiding principles prevalent within the practice of conservation, and described what he saw as their specific application to photographs. Much of Orraca's language and the force of these principles bears more than a passing resemblance to that found in market-oriented texts about collectible photographs during this period. "It is the *original* object that is of importance," he says, and later, "the Conservator must respect the artistic and historical integrity of any object or artifact. [...] A photograph, just like any other object, has a history. It begins with the intent of the maker and goes on further to the individual who collects."³⁵⁶ In Orraca's estimation, any treatment that ignores or alters the original appearance (including modes of presentation such as mounting or inclusion in albums), does so at its peril. It is also the whole object that matters, he insists; copying a photograph reproduces only its pictorial information, and squanders its significance as a historical artifact. At the same time, we find hints here of the friction between the goals of conservation and the values of the market, or even the art museum. The caution against breaking up albums of photographs, for example, is one that innumerable dealers, curators, and auction houses have flouted over the years for the sake of sale or exhibition. Orraca also distinguishes between preserving endangered objects and treating them for cosmetic purposes. Some conservators, he says, "can make an object look as beautiful as when it was new, or at least, as beautiful as they *think* it was when it was new, but in the process they have destroyed its history, the evidence which time leaves on everything in the process of growing old."³⁵⁷ We find in Orraca's talk, which set the stage for the

³⁵⁵ José Orraca, "Philosophy of Conservation (1974)," in *Issues in the Conservation of Photographs*, 26–33.

³⁵⁶ Orraca, "Philosophy of Conservation," 27, 28. Italics in original.

³⁵⁷ Orraca, "Philosophy of Conservation," 31.

full-fledged emergence of professional photograph conservation, a parallel to many of the claims and conundrums that we have already seen in other discourses of this period. Above all there is the insistence that photographs are significant well beyond their function as image carriers.

Accordingly, there are no true duplicates even among prints from the same negative, particularly if made at different times or by different people, or indeed, even if simply *owned* by different people. We also see a valuation of both original intent and the life of the object as it changes over time.

Thus although photograph conservation ostensibly exists as a field distinct from the concerns of the marketplace, it is clear that there are significant areas of overlap, and that both can also coincide with the scholarly appreciation of photographs as historical artifacts and objects of study. Caring for historical photographs, for example, necessitates an understanding of different photographic processes, as each presents its own set of concerns and requirements from a preservation standpoint. The prodigious material and technical research carried out by photograph conservators since the 1970s, in turn, has added to the rigor of both commercial catalogues—for example, by way of more robust and accurate lot descriptions—and to certain strands of academic research into historical practice and practitioners. In recent years, there have been a number of ambitious collaborative projects that bring together museum curators, art historians, conservators, and other scholars from a variety of disciplines, and which emphasize a material- or object-based approach to the study of photographs.³⁵⁸ The organizers of one such

³⁵⁸ See for example Mitra Abbaspour, Lee Ann Daffner, and Maria Morris Hambourg, eds., *Object:Photo: Modern Photographs, the Thomas Walther Collection 1909–1949* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2014); Constance McCabe, ed., *Platinum and Palladium Photographs: Technical History, Connoisseurship, and Preservation* (Washington, DC: Photographic Materials Group, American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, 2017). I am thinking as well of the 2019 symposium *Material Immaterial: Photographs in the 21st Century*, organized by historian Monica Bravo and conservator Paul Messier at Yale University, whose presenters included conservators, historians, curators, dealers, and collectors. There are also several recent or upcoming single-author projects that sit at the

exemplary project, *Object:Photo*, published by the Museum of Modern Art in 2014, cite the physicality of photographs as a generative starting point for historical research, noting that “the photographic print harbors clues to its maker and making, to the causes it may have served, and to the treatment it has received, and these bits of information, gathered through close examination of the print, offer fresh perspectives on the history of the era.”³⁵⁹ It worth pointing out that the impetus for *Object:Photo* was the museum’s acquisition of an important group of early-twentieth-century European avant-garde photographs from a private collector, Thomas Walther, a German photographer who moved to New York and began collecting photographs in the late 1970s. Thus the project also underscores the complex but potentially productive intersection of conservation, academic scholarship, curation, and the market.

Nor was the advent of photograph conservation strictly relegated to the institutional realm. Certainly many pioneers of the field, including Orraca and Walter Clark at the George Eastman House, and Eugene Ostroff at the Smithsonian, did work in this context. And in 1977, Robert Weinstein, a historian, and Larry Booth, a curator, published their *Collection, Use, and Care of Historical Photographs*, which was aimed primarily at stewards of large photographic collections in historical museums and archives.³⁶⁰ But the perceived need to understand and care

intersection of technical art history and histories of, for example, labor and capitalism, ecology, and colonialism. See Clara von Waldthausen, “Reflections on the Material History and Materiality of Photographic Gelatine,” *PhotoResearcher*, no. 25 (2016): 25–35; Katherine Mintie, “Material Matters: The Transatlantic Trade in Photographic Materials during the Nineteenth Century,” *Panorama* 6, no. 2 (2020); Siobhan Angus, *Camera Geologica* (Duke University Press, forthcoming); Monica Bravo, *Silver Pacific: A Material History of Photography and its Minerals, 1840–1890* (forthcoming).

³⁵⁹ Mitra Abbaspour and Maria Morris Hambourg, “Introduction,” *Object:Photo*, accessed January 30, 2023, https://www.moma.org/interactives/objectphoto/the_project.html#intro. In addition to being published as a book, *Object:Photo* was launched as an interactive website and an exhibition, “Modern Photographs from the Thomas Walther Collection, 1909–1949.” The project included contributions by, among many others, historians Olivier Lugon, Antonin Dufek, and Andrés Zervigón; curators Quentin Bajac and Matthew Witkovsky; conservators Paul Messier and Constance McCabe; and former auction house expert Beth Gates Warren.

³⁶⁰ Weinstein and Booth, *Collection, Use, and Care of Historical Photographs*.

for photographs on a material level infiltrated other arenas as well. For one thing, we find it in the collecting guides already discussed. The books by Landt and Liesl Dennis, Richard Blodgett, and Lee Witkin and Barbara London all include entire chapters on caring for photographic prints. “Concepts of preservation (or the lack of them) in the past,” writes Witkin in one exemplary passage,

often turned on the perception of a photograph as a cheap, reproducible, mass-produced item. As the awareness of photographs as irreplaceable and rare objects has heightened, attitudes about how to treat them have become much stricter. Collectors have a responsibility to preserve unique images for future generations, in addition to protecting their own acquisitions.”³⁶¹

Collecting guides from the beginning offered insight into identifying and understanding historical photographic processes and materials, and were often larded with advice about how to care for them—or when to leave well enough alone. (For the amateur collector, “the general advice,” wrote B.E.C. Howarth-Loomes in 1974, “offered in regard to cleaning daguerreotypes is—don’t.”³⁶²) In 1976, *The Print Collector’s Newsletter* ran an article by curator Miles Barth that surveyed the available literature on photographic conservation and preservation, speaking directly to “the surge of buying, collecting, and dealing in 19th- and 20th-century photography during the past five years.”³⁶³ The same year, Sotheby Parke-Bernet published a pamphlet by Doris Bry which likewise acknowledged the “recent surge of interest in collecting” and addressed the relative dearth of information on caring for one’s photographs.³⁶⁴ The inclusion of information about caring for photographs in these publications points to a heightened awareness of these objects’ singularity and irreplaceability, whether as historical artifacts, works of art, or

³⁶¹ Witkin and London, *The Photograph Collector’s Guide*, 57.

³⁶² Howarth-Loomes, *Victorian Photography*, 25.

³⁶³ Barth, “Notes on Conservation & Restoration of Photographs,” 48.

³⁶⁴ Doris Bry, *An Approach to the Care of Photographs* (New York: Sotheby Park-Bernet, 1976). Bry was an important scholar on the work of Alfred Stieglitz, as well as a long-time friend and business agent for Georgia O’Keeffe.

investments. Their perceived value from an aesthetic, scholarly, and financial perspective gave new urgency to the task of keeping them safe in perpetuity, and repairing damage that might already be extant. I also suggest that this turn to preservation represents an act of plucking photographs from the flow of time. Haidy Geismar and Pip Laurensen have recently addressed the role of conservation in “supporting the view that once the work enters a collection, it is considered fixed.”³⁶⁵ It is telling in this sense that photograph conservation indeed came of age contemporaneously with the market. Vintage photographs, as we have seen, are valued for their authenticity, originality, and for (some of) the visible signs of their “life-world.” But their newfound status as both investments and as historical artifacts essentially dictated that this life-world should be arrested at the moment of optimal value. Once photographs enter a collection, conservators, curators, and other stewards must often balance their desire to actually exhibit these works against their mandate to care for them over the long-term, and to preserve their value. The tension between these two poles even takes on a hint of irony when the photographs in question enjoyed no such reverence in their previous lives. Denise Bethel recalls selling at auction a group of 1930s press photographs of crime scenes, “rumpled and torn, with fabulous overpainting, crop-marks, highlights.” She encountered them again shortly thereafter, not only featured prominently in *The New York Times* Sunday magazine, but on display at an upscale New York gallery. When she asked to see them, she was offered a pair of gloves by the gallery assistant, who gingerly handed her each print one by one, with a caution about their fragility.³⁶⁶

³⁶⁵ Haidy Geismar and Pip Laurensen, “Finding Photography: Dialogues Between Anthropology and Conservation,” in *Photo-Objects: On the Materiality of Photographs and Photo-Archives in the Humanities and Sciences*, Studies 12 (Edition Open Access; Max Planck Research Library for the History and Development of Knowledge, 2019), 182.

³⁶⁶ Bethel, “Cindy and Me,” 180.

These concerns can also be found bubbling to the surface in photographic *practice* during this period; that is, in the work of photographers themselves. In a sense, the growing sensitivity among photographers to the longevity of their prints speaks to a kind of pre-emptive preservation, a self-awareness about making work that might be collected and kept for posterity. It is, to paraphrase Lee Witkin, a dawning realization that “today’s print is tomorrow’s vintage print.” This concern with the longevity of photographs dates back to the earliest years of the medium, but became more systematized and rigorous leading up to and during the photo boom. It manifested particularly in practices of what A. D. Coleman recently referred to as “archivalizing”—photographers’ growing attentiveness to processing, handling, and storing their photographs as a matter of course.³⁶⁷ Perhaps the era’s flagship publication in this regard is the descriptively titled *Procedures for Processing and Storing Black and White Photographs for Maximum Possible Permanence, and Instructions for Set-up and Use of: East Street Gallery Archival Print Washers, Film Washers, and Automatic Washer Controls*, Henry Wilhelm’s self-published 1969 pamphlet, which he revised and re-released the following year.³⁶⁸ [Figure 53] Wilhelm has gone on to become a leading pioneer in research on the stability of photographic materials, particularly color, but this modest—yet often-cited—publication represents some of his earliest efforts.³⁶⁹ It is essentially a guide to making the most stable possible photographic negatives and prints, and was issued in tandem with Wilhelm’s patented archival print washer, the first of its kind. At this time there was a paucity of “lay literature” on archival processing,

³⁶⁷ A. D. Coleman, conversation with the author, June 6, 2019.

³⁶⁸ Henry Wilhelm, *Procedures for Processing and Storing Black and White Photographs or Maximum Possible Permanence, and Instructions for Set-up and Use of: East Street Gallery Archival Print Washers, Film Washers, and Automatic Washer Controls* (Grinnell, Iowa: East Street Gallery, 1969).

³⁶⁹ Even collectors seem to have found Wilhelm’s pamphlet instructive, judging by the copy included in Sam Wagstaff’s personal collection. See Series II, Box 77, folder 10, Samuel Wagstaff papers, 2005.M.46, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles California.

although, as the pamphlet notes and as its bibliography bears out, there was a growing body of research emerging from the Eastman Kodak Company.³⁷⁰ But the most widely accessible guidance available to photographers up to this point was to be found in Ansel Adams's books on photographic process, particularly *The Print*.³⁷¹ These books were aimed at amateur photographers who might wish to learn the rudiments of fine art photography from its most famous living practitioner. And it is significant that Adams, as an ardent spokesperson for the value of the original photographic print, should have been among the earliest to dispense accessible, practical information about archival processing.

Another exemplary but less often remarked manifestation of this newfound emphasis on archival processing was Minor White's activity at M.I.T., where he taught photography for the last decade of his life. In 1968, White established a photography collection at the university, expressly dedicated to collecting only "prints processed to archival standards."³⁷² Commenting on the new initiative in *The New York Times*, Jacob Deschin explained, "The concept is offered as a new idea in collecting and in the hope of collecting and producing 'fine photographs far into the future.'"³⁷³ In response to the university's extensive stipulations as to what constituted legitimately archival processing and presentation, however, Deschin offers a somewhat skeptical caveat:

For one thing, most photographers do not have the necessary time the method [for archival processing] requires. There is also the strong possibility that the limitation might have a tendency to cut off from the collection many talented photographers whose work deserves

³⁷⁰ East Street Gallery, *Procedures for Processing and Storing*, 24–25.

³⁷¹ Ansel Adams, *The Print* (New York: Morgan & Morgan, 1950). It is worth noting that the 1970 edition of Adams's *Camera and Lens*, also from the Basic Photo series, actually featured a picture of Wilhelm's print washer. As a college student, Wilhelm in fact worked for Adams during a 1965 summer photography workshop in Yosemite. Ansel Adams, *Camera and Lens: The Creative Approach* (New York: Morgan & Morgan Inc., 1970).

³⁷² Indeed, White may have specifically drawn from Wilhelm's pamphlet in his conceptualization of this collection. My thanks to Gus Kayafas for this observation. Conversation with the author, March 5, 2021.

³⁷³ Jacob Deschin, "M.I.T. Starts Archival Photographic Collection," *The New York Times*, April 7, 1968.

inclusion as being representative of contemporary achievement. This could lead to a sameness in the collection that would reflect only a small part of what is going on today in photography.³⁷⁴

Deschin's remarks are astute, and presage Lee Witkin's later admonition about overly fetishizing the idea of vintage prints. Both Deschin and Witkin caution against too narrow an obsession with valuing and collecting a certain type of photograph, suggesting instead that the field should be acknowledged for its variety. Certainly the kind of preciousness implied by collecting vintage prints and painstakingly observing the most rigorous standards of archival care was also coming under considerable pressure during this period, as we have seen. Artists and photographers of all stripes embraced photography for reasons, and in ways, vastly more expansive than the pathway suggested by its early-twentieth-century modernist roots.

Faking Vintage Prints

The newfound emphasis on the authentic, original, and *valuable* photographic print was not without its obverse: the photographic fake. Photography's reproducibility adds a peculiar twist to the idea of creating false copies of works of art and, in fact, there have been relatively few noteworthy instances of photographic forgery. For much of the medium's history, given the absence of a lucrative market for original photographs, forgery was simply not worth the trouble. Harry Lunn suggested as much at the 1975 *Collecting the Photograph* symposium, opining that "there wasn't enough money involved in photography yet for it to attract really top-notch forgers."³⁷⁵ But in addition to the lack of financial imperative for forging photographs, I would also argue that, prior to the photo boom and the advent of *vintage* as a determinant of value,

³⁷⁴ Deschin, "M.I.T."

³⁷⁵ Hagen, "Collecting the Photograph," 4.

creating a fake photograph made little logical sense. As the members of the nineteenth-century Fading Committee might have agreed, a copy of a photograph is, after all, still a genuine photograph. I am not speaking here simply of staging or manipulating misleading photographic images—these practices have a long and storied history, and raise a host of other considerations. Rather, the issue at hand is the creation of falsified photographic *objects*, and in all such instances that one can point to, this has meant creating fake vintage prints. Accordingly, such forgeries do not seem to have appeared until the mid-1970s, and even since then have been few and far between.

The first instance of apparent forgery from this period remains rather murky and unresolved. A person with the extraordinary name of George Bernard Shaw purportedly found a box of thirty “rare and historic” photographs at a junk shop in Manchester, England, and purchased the lot for a small sum. When he got home, he discovered another 150 additional photogenic drawings of leaves, flowers, and moths at the bottom of the box.³⁷⁶ Shaw had them authenticated by experts at the North Western Museum of Science and Technology (now the Science and Industry Museum) in Manchester, who dated them to the mid-1830s or early 1840s. They were in turn consigned to both Christie’s South Kensington and Sotheby’s Belgravia to be included in upcoming sales, where many were purchased by some of the era’s major dealers and collectors.³⁷⁷ Seven examples were also purchased by the Museum of Science in London. [Figure 54] After the relative success of these sales, Shaw continued to bring more photogenic drawings for

³⁷⁶ “Historic Prints in 50p Bargain,” *The Guardian*, July 21, 1975.

³⁷⁷ The auctions in which the photographs were sold includes Sotheby’s Belgravia, *Photographic Images and Related Material* (London: Sotheby’s Belgravia, March 19, 1976), 32-33; Christie’s South Kensington, *19th and 20th Century Photographs* (London: Christie’s South Kensington, Ltd., June 10, 1976), 6; Sotheby’s Belgravia, *Photographic Images and Related Material* (London: Sotheby’s Belgravia, June 11, 1976), 16–17; and Sotheby’s Belgravia, *Photographic Images and Related Material* (London: Sotheby’s Belgravia, October 19, 1976), 36–37.

consignment, along with daguerreotypes and eventually an assortment of salted paper prints attributed to Hill and Adamson. Some of these, according to Stuart Bennett, the photography expert at Christie's at the time, were apparently delivered on behalf of a "friend." The Hill and Adamson photographs in particular drew Bennett's skepticism, appearing to be "the crudest possible forgeries," and accordingly Christie's withdrew all of Shaw's material from sale and refused any additional consignments from him.³⁷⁸ At around the same time, Shaw presented to the curators at the North Western Museum of Science and Technology three daguerreotypes of a scientist in what looked to be a laboratory, and later a set of five daguerreotypes of the moon. The daguerreotypes were examined by photography experts and even an astronomer, and although they seemed to be plausibly genuine, their uncertain provenance raised a number of red flags.³⁷⁹ Suspicions ran sufficiently high that the police were called and Shaw's home was searched, but no evidence of forgery was discovered. Nonetheless, the case was tried at the Manchester Crown Court. Bennett served as one of the expert witnesses, and Shaw was ultimately convicted on the rather vague charge of "false pretenses."³⁸⁰

In retrospect, Bennett and others have suggested that the sudden appearance of a large quantity of such normally scarce objects as early photogenic drawings should have raised alarm bells from the start. It is important to remember, however, that the mid-1970s, particularly in the United Kingdom, was a rather singular period of abundance when it came to rare photographic material. As auction sales drew more attention and higher prices, more individuals came out of the woodwork, having suddenly remembered old albums and boxes of photographs long

³⁷⁸ Stuart Bennett, "Collecting Pitfalls: Some Cautionary Tales," in *How to Buy Photographs* (Oxford: Phaidon, Christie's, 1987), 121–22.

³⁷⁹ Arthur Gill, "The Case of the Two Little Old Ladies," *Royal Photographic Society Historical Group Newsletter*, no. 60 (March 1983): 12.

³⁸⁰ Bennett, "Collecting Pitfalls," 122; Gill, "Two Little Old Ladies," 12; Bennett, conversation with the author, January 27, 2022.

forgotten in family attics or country estates. In many cases, these were genuine treasures. Bennett remembers, for example, a copy of William Henry Fox Talbot's *Sun Pictures in Scotland* that narrowly escaped a bonfire, and a stack of pristine prints by Julia Margaret Cameron brought in by a private consignor. Auctioneer Philippe Garner has joked that he could simply stand in the front door of Sotheby's Belgravia with his arms spread and wait for the photographs to come rolling in.³⁸¹ Further, Shaw's photogenic drawings were apparently made on old paper, and even today it would prove difficult to determine their precise age. Nonetheless, out of an abundance of caution, institutions that still knowingly possess these objects have been careful to identify them as possible forgeries made in the 1970s.³⁸² [Figure 55]

The photo boom's most sensational case of fakery was both more definitive and more complex, hovering between a serious forgery and a winking hoax designed explicitly to draw attention to the purported superficiality of the market. And although it too was carried out in England, its repercussions were felt in the photography community in the United States, and it was covered in the American press.³⁸³ In 1974, the English advertising photographer Howard Grey took a series of photographs of young girls dressed in Victorian garb, supposedly as a way to add some variety to his professional portfolio.³⁸⁴ He gave a set of gelatin silver prints of the

³⁸¹ Bennett, conversation with the author, January 27, 2022; Philippe Garner, conversation with the author, April 14, 2022.

³⁸² The Science and Industry Museum is one such example; another is the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The latter obtained their photograph in 2014, but accepted it for its historical interest as a known forgery. "Science Museum Group Collection," accessed December 28, 2022, <https://collection.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/documents/aa110016645/photogenic-drawings>; "Botanical Specimen," accessed December 28, 2022, <https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/332688>.

³⁸³ See for example Magnus Linklater, "Faking Out the Collectors: The Strange History Behind a Portfolio of 'Victorian' Photographs," *The Washington Post*, December 10, 1978; Mary Steinbauer, "The Puzzling Case of the Faked Photographs," *Life*, July 1981, 10–14. Linklater's article was excerpted from his own, slightly earlier, piece, originally published in the *London Times*.

³⁸⁴ Mark Haworth-Booth, "Howard Grey and Graham Ovenden's Fake 'Victorian' Photos," in *Fake? The Art of Deception*, ed. Mark Jones (London: British Museum Publications, 1990), 244.

images to his friend Graham Ovenden, who was an artist as well as an important collector and publisher of Victorian photographs. Apparently unbeknownst to Grey, Ovenden proceeded to make copy negatives of the images, and, through a series of steps, used them to produce a cache of salted paper prints.³⁸⁵ Seven of them, newly designated as vintage prints by a previously unknown nineteenth-century photographer named Francis Hetling, and with titles purportedly culled from Hetling's diaries, were included with some misgiving by curator Valerie Lloyd in a 1974 exhibition called *The Camera and Dr. Barnardo* at the National Portrait Gallery in London.³⁸⁶ The prints were clearly labeled as being lent by Ovenden. [Figure 56] Other "Hetling" prints landed in the hands of various collectors in both England and the United States, including Philippe Garner, Harry Lunn, Sam Wagstaff, and Ovenden's friend, the dealer Eric Sommer.³⁸⁷ Some visitors to the National Portrait Gallery exhibition had their doubts about the legitimacy of the photographs. One of the models was recognized by a family friend, and the girl's mother was well aware that Grey had recently photographed her. Other observers noticed discrepancies in the lighting, poses, and physical appearances of some of the subjects. For example, one of the photographs showed a disheveled young girl with her arm thrown up to cover her face, as though in shame. [Figure 57] But as Stuart Bennett points out, "the notion of the intrusive photographer is a modern one, unknown to early photography, and this apparent modernity in the 'Hetling'

³⁸⁵ Ovenden, however, claimed that Grey was in on the scheme.

³⁸⁶ Valerie Lloyd, and Gillian Wagner, *The Camera and Dr. Barnardo* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1974). Thomas John Barnardo was an Irish-born philanthropist known for establishing homes for neglected children in Victorian London.

³⁸⁷ Francis Hetling photographs indeed show up on invoices in the Harry Lunn Papers and the Sam Wagstaff Papers at the Getty Research Institute. See also Magnus Linklater, "Faking Out the Collectors: The Strange History Behind a Portfolio of 'Victorian' Photographs," *The Washington Post*, December 10, 1978; Bennett, "Collecting Pitfalls," 117–121. Linklater's description of Lunn's Hetlings, one of which he in turn sold to an unnamed curator, notes that some of them were "yellowed, stained, and torn," and "do indeed look old." Lunn himself recalled the Ovenden episode, including his own involvement, in a 1994 interview. See Anthony Georgieff, "Harry Lunn, Jr: The Man with the View," *Katalog* 6, no. 3 (March 1994): 10–12.

leads by deduction to even more conclusive doubts of its authenticity.”³⁸⁸ In addition, such a spontaneous pose would have been exceedingly unlikely given the long exposure times of early photography. Nothing, however, initially came of these murmurings. Two years later, Valerie Lloyd turned down additional “Hetlings” for inclusion in a sale by the dealers Colnaghi & Co., stipulating that she would need direct evidence of Hetling’s existence. Such evidence was never supplied. Ovenden’s exploits ultimately culminated in a police investigation and a 1980 court trial, by all accounts a raucous affair that ended in his and Grey’s acquittal on charges of conspiracy to defraud. Ovenden was also acquitted of profiting from the deceptive sale of several Hetling prints to Eric Sommer.³⁸⁹

Throughout the trial, Ovenden claimed repeatedly that the hoax was intended as a joke, or in his words a “pastiche,” at the expense of “The Establishment, the photographic experts who pretend to great knowledge.”³⁹⁰ He wanted, he said, “to demonstrate that collectors and dealers in Victorian photography equate age with beauty. This was something that had to be said, and if it wasn’t said then art will die because contemporary artists can’t flourish. Art will become a mausoleum.”³⁹¹ The plan all along was supposedly to carry out the rather heavy-handed deception before revealing it with great fanfare in the form of a book of the Hetling photographs. This particular outcome, of course, was stymied by the high-profile court case.

In a somewhat contrived coda, the May 1981 issue of *The Connoisseur* magazine ran an article by Isabelle Anscombe that professed to “test the substance of the market for early photographers,” alleging that few so-called experts in the field have any “knowledge of the

³⁸⁸ Bennett, “Collecting Pitfalls,” 120; Steinbauer, “The Puzzling Case,” 12.

³⁸⁹ Richard Boston, “The Ovenden Affair,” *Quarto*, no. 14 (February 1981): 13.

³⁹⁰ The judge in his case was not, apparently, convinced by this terminology. See Frances Gibb, “Pastiche a Fancy Name for Fake, Judge Tells Jury,” *The Times*, November 11, 1980.

³⁹¹ Boston, “The Ovenden Affair,” 11, 12.

physics and chemistry employed in photographic processes.”³⁹² To prove her assertion, Anscombe commissioned the skills of, once again, Howard Grey to produce another small selection of “Victorian” calotypes, some of which featured the author herself. [Figure 58] The prints were “produced precisely along Victorian lines, using nineteenth century papers, mounts and glues,” and were shopped around to the National Portrait Gallery, the Victoria and Albert Museum, Sotheby’s, Christie’s, and to the well-known London photography dealer Robert Hershkowitz.³⁹³ The ruse was a resounding success, with all of the experts identifying the prints as “calotypes of the 1840s or 1850s” and assigning to them substantial monetary value.³⁹⁴ In her article, Anscombe makes the somewhat dubious claim that the photographs “were not intended to deceive experts in Victorian photography, but were intended as examples of the kind of expert deception daily practiced professionally by advertising photographers.”³⁹⁵ Perhaps more convincingly, she also suggests that the ease with which experts were duped “raised disturbing questions about the vulnerability of the photographic market.”³⁹⁶

Although Ovenden and Anscombe’s gambits seem to have had fewer direct repercussions than expected at the time—a write-up in *The Times* called Anscombe’s article a “bombshell”—both draw attention to a number of key points about the early market for photographs and the concept of *vintage*.³⁹⁷ In particular, it is significant that Ovenden, and later Anscombe, specifically chose to replicate nineteenth-century vintage photographs. It is clear that the purported value of the photographs rested not only on their content but on their age. Even in the

³⁹² Isabelle Anscombe, “Daylight Robbery? Exposing the Shady Side of the Calotype,” *The Connoisseur* 207, no. 831 (May 1981): 49.

³⁹³ Anscombe, “Daylight Robbery?,” 51; Geraldine Norman, “Photographs Reproduced by 1840s Process Fooled Experts,” *The Times*, May 7, 1981.

³⁹⁴ Anscombe, 51.

³⁹⁵ Anscombe, 51.

³⁹⁶ Anscombe, 49.

³⁹⁷ Norman, “Photographs Reproduced.”

absence of a reliable provenance or a known artist—“Hetling” was of course fictitious, and thus naturally unheard of—the attractiveness and apparent age of the prints was what made them worthy of exhibition and sale. When Philippe Garner learned the true story of his Hetling prints, he was said to have “moved them from his nineteenth century collection to his twentieth century collection.”³⁹⁸ And yet it is telling that “Hetling,” however the attribution might be corrected, is not, at the time of this writing, considered a significant or valuable photographer, and the whole episode has been largely forgotten. Indeed, any examples of this work seem to have been confiscated, destroyed, or kept private, and are now accessible only as reproductions in a few scattered publications.

Even in these early years of the market, some observers were already chafing against the outsized value ascribed to old photographs. Photographers themselves—as well as artists like Ovenden—may have found this preference for the past especially egregious. An opinion column in *The British Journal of Photography*, written in the wake of the *Connoisseur* exposé, asserted that

for the vast majority of photographers it is the democracy of photography which is one of its appeals and their attitude to the collector market in bygones is one of derision... In brief, we feel that those who seek to profit from making photographic bygones of no artistic merit into appreciating investments, have only themselves to blame if they get taken in. Original prints and negatives from early masters of photography are a different matter but once again it is good to know that it is quite easy to make a replica of any of these prints, because it means that any of us can possess one as good as the original, which is what photography was invented for.³⁹⁹

The market preference for the old, famous, and singular, contrasted with rejoinders like the one above, again bring up some of the same debates already alluded to about the fundamental nature

³⁹⁸ Denis Herbstein, “A Curious Case of Urchins, Fakes and ‘Rumpole,’” *The Sunday Times*, November 2, 1980; Bennett, “Collecting Pitfalls,” 117.

³⁹⁹ “Comment: Successful Hoax,” *The British Journal of Photography* 128, no. 6308 (June 19, 1981): 614.

of photography. Namely, whether it is a democratic tool whose essential strength is its reproducibility and accessibility, and whether it makes sense to place an outsized value on a rarified sample of original prints made by an officially sanctioned cadre of artistic “masters.” Photography has been valued for both of these reasons, and used in countless other ways, and arguably all are valid. But it is understandable that the sudden explosion of the market in the 1970s rankled those who felt cut out of the equation, either as practicing artists or indeed as scholars who argued for a more capacious understanding of the medium. Photographers at the time were even known to respond skeptically to the market preference for vintage examples of their *own* work. According to Denise Bethel, Berenice Abbott “used to laugh when she would discover one of her old wilted brown photographs in the back of a drawer... She couldn’t understand why people didn’t recognize she had become a better printer.”⁴⁰⁰ Other photographers, like Paul Caponigro, were more circumspect, admitting that perhaps “it’s quite valid to collect [vintage prints] for a serious collector and a connoisseur. The vintage stuff definitely has something about them. They are unique.”⁴⁰¹

Vintage, I think, highlights the growing rigorousness and specialization of connoisseurship as an inherent facet of the market for photographs, particularly when it comes to assessing historical works. On one hand, the *British Journal of Photography* columnist’s idea that “original prints and negatives from early masters of photography are a different matter” is short-sighted, particularly given that so much of the energy of the photo boom came from the discovery of hitherto unknown “masters” and masterworks. To insist only on the validity of those already

⁴⁰⁰ Quoted in Richard B. Woodward, “On Artificial Rarity and Fakery,” *The New York Times*, April 23, 2000. Apparently Bethel had her hands full explaining the distinction to collectors as well. See Bethel, “Cindy and Me,” 179.

⁴⁰¹ Susan Larsen, “Oral History Interview with Paul Caponigro, July 30–August 12, 1999 | Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution,” accessed January 5, 2023, <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-paul-caponigro-11968>.

established seems conservative and missing the point. On the other hand, Rosalind Krauss has characterized connoisseurship as “part of a system for *producing* authors rather than certifying the work of ones that exist already,” and something of this mechanism is brought to light in Ovenden’s hoax, which points up the fallibility and even the fallacy of such judgements.⁴⁰² Again it is telling that, the true identity of the Hetling photographs having been revealed, the same interest (or value) was not subsequently bestowed on the works as authored by either Grey or Ovenden, despite the fact that the prints themselves had not changed. The scheme was also deeply rooted in the state of the market specific to the 1970s photo boom. Connoisseurship, scholarly expertise, and the field of photograph conservation were all relatively new at this point. In addition, the heightened market interest in nineteenth-century photography was particular to that time, and has since broadened significantly to include the work of later eras and contemporary photography in particular.

Perhaps it was inevitable, then, that more recent instances of photographic forgery have evolved and grown more sophisticated along with the field. The most remarkable, and one that truly did send shockwaves through the photography community, was the apparent forgery and circulation of hundreds of “vintage” Lewis Hine prints by the renowned scholar Walter Rosenblum, which came to light in 1999.⁴⁰³ In this instance, unlike the Hetling hoax, there was a non-negligible measure of authenticity to the prints in question: they were seemingly made from the original Hine negatives by a skilled printer, Rosenblum, who was intimately familiar with

⁴⁰² Rosalind Krauss, “Retaining the Original? The State of the Question,” in *Retaining the Original: Multiple Originals, Copies, and Reproductions*, Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, Studies in the History of Art; v. 20 (Washington, DC; Hanover: National Gallery of Art; Distributed by the University Press of New England, 1989), 11. Italics in original.

⁴⁰³ Rosenblum was an associate of Hine’s, but his claims that he worked directly as Hine’s assistant have met with some skepticism. See Analissa Moreno, “Let the Buyer Beware: An Examination of Photography, Forgery, and Authenticity” (MA thesis, Sotheby’s Institute of Art, 2014), 31; Richard B. Woodward, “Too Much of a Good Thing,” *The Atlantic*, June 1, 2003, 37.

Hine's work. And unlike Hetling, of course, Lewis Hine was a famous historical photographer of significant reputation; the faked prints were all of well-known images. Thus it was specifically the falsification of their age and provenance, as well as the substantial prices they garnered, that fueled the subsequent uproar and extensive legal repercussions. (Which were, however, settled out of court; Rosenblum never admitted to any wrongdoing and was never formally charged.)⁴⁰⁴

There was little question within the photography community that the prints were “fake,” despite the murkiness of the semantics. As Richard Woodward mused in *The Atlantic*, “If someone makes a contemporary print from the original negative and then falsely sells that print as vintage, is this thing a ‘forgery’?”⁴⁰⁵ The answer, it seems, is a resounding “yes.” For decades, but especially since the 1970s, untold quantities of posthumous prints have been made from existing negatives, and have been openly exhibited and sold. The crime, in the case of the Lewis Hine scandal, was specifically the misrepresentation of such prints as vintage—made by the photographer close to the time of the negative. One irony is that Walter and Naomi Rosenblum themselves published an article at the height of the photo boom that, among other things, parsed the fine points of *vintage* and suggested that “There is nothing inherently wrong either morally, aesthetically, or legally, with reprints... provided they are identified as such.”⁴⁰⁶ Another is that Rosenblum's prints were widely acknowledged as being finer than Hine's originals—“richer in tone and texture” and certainly in better condition.⁴⁰⁷ But, as Ovenden had asserted two decades earlier, the market was ultimately far more invested in the prints' age than their beauty, and in their proximity to the fabled moment of creation. In other words, once they were understood not

⁴⁰⁴ For a detailed summary and analysis of the Hine scandal, as well as the similarly cataclysmic Man Ray forgery that preceded it, see Moreno, “Let the Buyer Beware.”

⁴⁰⁵ Richard B. Woodward, “Too Much of a Good Thing.”

⁴⁰⁶ Naomi Rosenblum and Walter Rosenblum, “The Art Historian and the Photographic Image,” *Art Journal; New York, Etc.* 36, no. 2 (Winter 1976): 140.

⁴⁰⁷ Woodward, “Too Much of a Good Thing.”

to be vintage prints, their value evaporated, regardless of how beautiful the prints themselves were. Indeed, it was their exceptional quality and pristine condition that originally raised eyebrows and alerted experts that they might not be the vintage works Rosenblum claimed them to be. It took a battery of sophisticated tests, spearheaded by photograph conservator Paul Messier, to determine definitively that the prints could not possibly have been made in Hine's lifetime.⁴⁰⁸ Most of these tests, of course, had not been available in the 1970s when the Ovenden and Anscombe "pastiche" were circulated.⁴⁰⁹ Like forgery itself, it was only the photo boom and the subsequent expansion of the market for photographs that made such rigorous methods of identification relevant. Paul Messier himself has been instrumental in leading the response among photograph conservators, whose material expertise has grown ever more sophisticated since the 1970s. Writing in 2011 about his growing reference collection of historic photographic papers, Messier made the connection clear: "The rising market values of fine art prints combined with increasingly refined art historical scholarship made an understanding of the materials of the photographer an increasing priority. Not by accident, the Hine scandal—the largest of its kind in the history of the fine art photography market—was revealed through the work of art conservators."⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁸ These included the relatively straightforward process of dating the Agfa logos found on many of the ersatz Hine prints; but also the detection of optical brightening agents that would not have been present in papers manufactured before 1955, as well as microscopic paper-fiber analyses of the suspect prints. Paul Messier, "Materials Analysis of Photographic Paper," *IFAR Journal* 7, no. 2 (2004): 34–41; Paul Messier et al., "Optical Brightening Agents in Photographic Paper," *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 44, no. 1 (2005): 1–12; Moreno, "Let the Buyer Beware," 35–38.

⁴⁰⁹ In fact, given that both Ovenden and George Bernard Shaw made their fakes on old paper, it is still difficult to definitively prove their age based on material analysis alone.

⁴¹⁰ Paul Messier, "Photographic Papers in the 20th Century: Methodologies for Research, Authentication and Dating," in *Conservación de fotografías: treinta años de ciencia: conferencia internacional Logroño 2011 = Conservation of Photographs ; Thirty Years of Science: International Conference* (Pamplona: Conservación Acceso Archivos Patrimoniales [CAAP], 2016): 149.

The notion of vintage prints, and the great value ascribed to them, has been a deeply significant and influential force in the market for photographs since the 1970s. It has been a key concept in establishing rarity, originality, and thus collectability for a medium widely presumed to be one of infinite and identical copies. It has driven entire systems of classification and connoisseurship; formed the basis for scholarship in the history of photography; attracted forgers; and given rise to both professional conservation and a generally heightened attention to archival practices among photographers and collectors. It has also at times both attracted derision and raised important questions about the true value of photographs and photography. It might be said that vintage prints formed the bedrock of the early photography market, offering a clear and easily understandable parallel to the values already circulating in the print world, and in the art market as a whole. As such, it is arguable that the notion of *vintage* was of limited historical utility, given the narrowness of its scope and its predication on a very specific set of modernist precepts. Certainly this has been the objection raised since the late 1970s by scholars who have called for a more expansive understanding of the medium, and its historical imbrication in a vast array of cultural and political mechanisms. The project of enlarging the scope of photographic scholarship has been ongoing since the photo boom, and rightly so.

At the same time, it seems reductive to dismiss out of hand the entirety of the early market as inherently wrong-headed and ahistorical. While modernist art photography—and the appropriation of earlier practitioners into a modernist framework—is only one small piece of the medium’s totality, it is indeed a piece, and not an insignificant one. The early dealers, collectors, curators, and auction house experts who catalyzed the early market largely did so out of an abiding fascination with the medium and conviction as to its importance. While their interests may in some ways have been circumscribed, their deep curiosity opened the door to the

scholarship that followed, and formed a basis for the field of photo history, including its arguments, its fragmentation, and its expansion. The professionalization of photograph conservation, meanwhile, has meant that those in the field are better able to care for and analyze the objects without which the field itself would not exist, even as the variety and nature of those objects has continued to change. Even the few historical instances of forgery in the photography market have served to throw into relief the values and assumptions of that milieu, and to instigate advances in our understanding of photography's materiality. I argue that even as we continue to revisit and revise the values set by the early market, it remains imperative to understand them as foundational elements in an ongoing conversation.

CHAPTER FOUR: CREATING RARITY FROM SCRATCH: LIMITED EDITIONS AND PORTFOLIOS

The saleable category of the vintage print was defined and widely accepted as a way of assigning hierarchies of value to the great unsorted mass of historical photographs in the context of the increasingly sophisticated market of the 1970s. And it was the hunger for older photographs—particularly from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—that drove many of the first milestones in terms of photography sales and collections. At the same time, the growing cultural avidity for photography had a significant impact on both well-known and emerging photographers of the era. Indeed the period marked a point of transition for some photographers, who were able to support themselves for the first time by selling their original prints rather than by other means, such as teaching, photojournalism, or commercial assignments. And while contemporary photography was often slow to make its way into the secondary market (namely auctions), dealers and gallerists were at the forefront of establishing value for work by living photographers, whether that work was brand new or pulled from an artist’s earlier oeuvre. Some dealers appeared uncomfortable with or uninterested in the expanding boundaries of what constituted photographic work during this period. But both dealers in “traditional” photographs and contemporary art dealers had to grapple with the many of the same challenges of selling reproducible photographic work.

The concept of *vintage* effectively leveraged a kind of safe, built-in rarity: working materials became obsolete, objects transformed physically over time, photographers aged or died, and thus the photographs left behind were, if not always one of a kind, then part of a special and very limited class of object. What to do, then, about photographers who were still alive and well, with access to darkrooms stocked with readily-available materials, and theoretically

capable of turning out as many prints as the market might demand? If rarity couldn't be said to exist naturally in this case, the thinking seems to have gone, then it was time to create it. As in the case of "originality," the tools and the vocabulary for creating such rarity were ready to hand; one needed to look no further than to printmaking. In this sense, the 1970s photo boom gave rise not only to the concept of *vintage*, but to the widespread practice of creating limited editions of photographic prints. The decade furthermore saw an unprecedented efflorescence of limited edition portfolios—sets of loose photographs, published in clearly stated limited numbers, and generally housed in a folder or in a purpose-built box.⁴¹¹ The portfolio format has a long, if irregular, presence in the history of the photography going back to the nineteenth century, but was even earlier deployed for collections of prints and drawings. The practice of explicitly limiting copies of a reproducible image dates as far back as the seventeenth century, while the traditions of canceling plates to preclude further prints, and of signing prints as an indicator of originality, both began in the eighteenth.⁴¹² These practices became especially commonplace during the late-nineteenth-century British etching revival.⁴¹³ But such practices were much less often applied to photographs until the advent of the photo boom. Interestingly, although the limited edition has remained a widespread, if not universal, convention among photographers, portfolios genuinely peaked in the 1970s and have become less common in the decades since. By examining the surge in both of these practices, which have rarely been critically considered as

⁴¹¹ I am paraphrasing my own definition here, as laid out in my master's thesis. Kalkstein, "Inside the Box," 2.

⁴¹² Ad Stijnman, *Engraving and Etching, 1400–2000: A History of the Development of Manual Intaglio Printmaking Processes* (London; Houten: Archetype Publications; Hes and De Graaf Publishers, 2012), 338.

⁴¹³ Emma Chambers, "Objects of Desire: Etching and Print Collecting," in *An Indolent and Blundering Art?: The Etching Revival and the Redefinition of Etching in England* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1999), 63–87.

they relate to photography, I will continue to parse the ways that the nascent market grappled with questions of rarity and reproducibility during this heady period. Specifically, I will examine how these questions affected the practices and livelihood of living photographers, as well as, in some cases, the marketing of historical photographers. These issues also align with the growing commercialization of the photography market over the course of the 1970s, as collectors began to consider photographs as not just serious fine art but as serious investments.

Ansel Adams, Harry Lunn, and the Creation of Rarity

As with *vintage*, the notion of creating limited editions of photographs is both common-sense and controversial. For much of the medium's history, photographs were usually made on demand, whether in vast numbers as stereographs or celebrity cartes-de-visites, for example; as press prints to be reproduced mechanically in modern news media; or, more rarely, to fulfill the sporadic desires of museums, galleries, and collectors. In the absence of a market for original prints, this system worked reasonably well for most photographers. At the outset of the photo boom, there was a preliminary sense that this model would continue to suffice even as the market gradually expanded. Commentators such as Peter Bunnell and Lee Witkin reinforced the idea that photographers were essentially self-regulating when it came to scarcity. They maintained that most had little fondness for spending time in the darkroom, and that in any case such work was onerous enough to stifle any photographer's impulse to churn out an endless stream of prints.⁴¹⁴

The most obvious and endlessly cited exception to this rule was Ansel Adams, who famously printed his best-known image, *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico* (c. 1941), hundreds,

⁴¹⁴ Witkin and London, *The Photograph Collector's Guide*, 10.

if not thousands, of times.⁴¹⁵ Observers have been wont to point out that the photograph's abundance caused no apparent long-term damage to its market value.⁴¹⁶ But this assertion, upon closer examination, is somewhat misleading, as Adams was and is quite singular in the realm of art photography. Few other photographers of the era could claim anywhere near the same level of popular recognition and success. Indeed, Adams's biographer Mary Alinder suggested in 1996 that "more dollars, pounds, marks, and yen have been spent on *Moonrise* than on any other image in the history of photography."⁴¹⁷ In addition, Adams was himself a driving force in the market for photographs from the mid-1970s onward, thanks in large part to the combined efforts of his business manager William Turnage and dealer Harry Lunn. In her 1980 MBA thesis, written close on the heels of the photo boom, dealer Jill Quasha refers frequently to "The Ansel Adams Phenomenon," which she credits with both establishing "the importance of 'creating rarity'" and with setting a "new level of prices from which young contemporary photographers can measure themselves."⁴¹⁸

As Keith Davis has pointed out, 1971 was an early watershed year for the photo boom.⁴¹⁹ Among other benchmarks, there were two significant developments for Ansel Adams in particular, which had major reverberations for his career and for the market as a whole. In

⁴¹⁵ Mary Street Alinder, *Ansel Adams* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996), 197. Mary Alinder, Adams's assistant and biographer, calculated that Adams made approximately 1,300 prints of *Moonrise*. "The reason was simple," she writes, "he printed on demand, and he received more orders for *Moonrise* than for any other image." The lion's share of these prints, she adds, were made after 1970.

⁴¹⁶ Bunnell et al., "Photographs & Professionals: A Discussion," 55; Catherine Harris, "The Fine Art of Collecting Rarity," *Financial World*, February 1, 1981, 33; Tennyson Schad, "Shooting from the Hip," 218; David Walker, "What Does 'Limited Edition' Really Mean?," *Photo District News* 32, no. 7 (July 2012): 23.

⁴¹⁷ Alinder, *Ansel Adams*, 197.

⁴¹⁸ Quasha, "The Emergence of Photography as a Business," 38. Harry Lunn used this phrase as well, which may be where Quasha got it herself. See Longwell, "Creating Rarity," 88.

⁴¹⁹ Davis, "The Photo Boom," 390–391. Davis mentions the opening of LIGHT Gallery, an unprecedented number of high-profile photography exhibitions in New York, and George Rinhart's first foray as a full-time photography dealer, but many others could be added to the list as well.

January, Harry Lunn staged the first photography exhibition at his eponymous Washington, DC gallery, a show of Adams's *Portfolio V*,⁴²⁰ which "marked the beginning of Adams's financial success."⁴²¹ And early that same year, Adams hired William Turnage, then head of the Chubb Fellowship program at Yale University, as his business manager.⁴²² The "grand design" laid out by Adams and Turnage comprised a series of initiatives intended to boost Adams's reputation not only as a photographer but as a teacher, an advocate for the medium of photography, and an environmentalist. These initiatives included placing Adams's work in museums and collections; re-writing and re-printing his Basic Photo manuals;⁴²³ and printing sets of Adams's negatives, including some that had never been printed before, for sale to institutions.⁴²⁴ Among the first things Turnage did was raise the price of Adams's prints.⁴²⁵ A 1972 letter to print publisher Robert Feldman indicates that Turnage had scheduled Adams's print prices to increase by \$50

⁴²⁰ Adams published his first portfolio, *Parmelian Prints of the High Sierras*, in 1927. It comprised eighteen prints and was intended to be published in an edition of 150, which, however, was never completed. Between 1948 and 1976, he published seven more portfolios: *Portfolio I* (1948, twelve prints, edition of 75), *Portfolio II* (1950, fifteen prints, edition of 100 plus five presentation copies), *Portfolio III* (1960, sixteen prints, edition of 250 plus eight presentation copies), *Portfolio IV* (1963, fifteen prints, edition of 100 plus ten presentation copies), *Portfolio V* (1971, ten prints, edition of 100 plus ten presentation copies), *Portfolio VI* (1974, ten prints, edition of 100 plus 10 presentation copies), and *Portfolio VII* (1976, twelve prints including one unique polaroid, edition of 100 plus fifteen presentation copies). Witkin and London, *The Photograph Collector's Guide*, 278–279; Ansel Adams, *The Portfolios of Ansel Adams* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1977).

⁴²¹ Davis, "The Photo Boom," 391; Quasha, "Photography as a Business," 7. Lunn, who in the late 1960s still dealt exclusively in traditional graphics, first encountered a print of *Moonrise* by chance in the office of Robert Feldman, a "publisher of original, limited-edition graphics" and proprietor of Parasol Press, who in fact had published *Portfolio V*.

⁴²² Quasha, "Photography as a Business," 4; Alinder, *Ansel Adams*, 299-300.

⁴²³ The Basic Photo Manuals comprised five titles: Ansel Adams, *Camera and Lens* (New York: Morgan and Lester, 1948); *The Negative* (New York: Morgan & Morgan, 1948); *The Print* (New York: Morgan & Morgan, 1950); *Natural-Light Photography* (New York: Morgan & Morgan, 1952); *Artificial-Light Photography* (New York: Morgan & Morgan, 1952).

⁴²⁴ Adams's "museum sets," intended to encapsulate a kind of "autobiography" in photographs, were not in fact begun until 1979. The sets came in two sizes, a smaller set of twenty-five prints and a larger or "full" set of seventy-five, and Adams intended to print a total of 100 sets altogether. At the time of his death, he had printed fifty of the smaller sets and only six of the full sets. Nicolai Cikovsky, Jr., "Notes on the Museum Set," in *Ansel Adams: Classic Images: The Museum Set* (Boston; Washington, DC: New York Graphic Society; National Gallery of Art, 1985).

⁴²⁵ Quasha, "Photography as a Business," 26.

“across the board” at the close of the artist’s exhibition at the Witkin Gallery in October of that year.⁴²⁶ After the price increase, Adams’s smaller print sizes would cost \$200 and his 16x20” prints would go up to \$250. A historical list of Adams’s print prices from 1923 to 1980, compiled by his assistant Andrea Gray (later Andrea Turnage), indicates that by July 1973 they had risen again to \$250 and \$350, respectively; and by September 1974, after the publication of Adams’s *Portfolio VI*, both the larger and smaller prints sold for \$500.⁴²⁷ This development was apparently bolstered by the fact that Bill Turnage had the negatives used for the portfolio “run through a Wells Fargo check canceling machine.”⁴²⁸ [Figure 59]

Nonetheless, Adams and Turnage found that they had not made substantive headway on the other tenets of their plan, primarily because Adams was too busy in the darkroom. In late 1974, therefore, when Adams was 72 years old, Turnage made the momentous public announcement that the next year, in September 1975, the price of the photographer’s prints would jump from \$500 to \$800, and that on December 31 of that year, he would stop taking orders altogether.⁴²⁹ [Figure 60, Figure 61] In the wake of this announcement, Adams was inundated with new orders, apparently numbering 3,400 in total.⁴³⁰ Harry Lunn alone placed an order for 1,060 prints, and Tennyson Schad of LIGHT Gallery ordered another 700.⁴³¹ As Jill Quasha points out, the result of Turnage’s strategy was that, after 1975, “prices were in the hands

⁴²⁶ Letter from William Turnage to Robert Feldman, March 30, 1972, series 1, subseries 1, box 55, Ansel Adams Archive, AG 31, Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona.

⁴²⁷ Andrea Gray, “Print Price Information on Ansel Adams’ Prints,” May 22, 1980, series 2, subseries 1, box 4, unnumbered folder, Ansel Adams Archive, AG 31, Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona.

⁴²⁸ Longwell, “Creating Rarity,” 88. To my knowledge, Adams is one of very few photographers to have taken the extreme step of canceling his negatives, and it was not something he continued to do thereafter.

⁴²⁹ Quasha, “Photography as a Business,” 8.

⁴³⁰ Alinder, *Ansel Adams*, 304.

⁴³¹ Correspondence and invoices for Lunn’s orders, 1974 and 1975, series I, box 5, folders 2 and 3, Harry Lunn Papers, 004.M.17, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California.

of dealers.”⁴³² Lunn’s gambit at this point was two-fold. He began pricing Adams’s work according to quality and popularity rather than size, as had been Adams’s former system; and he began regularly releasing price lists that contained scheduled price increases.⁴³³ [Figure 62, Figure 63] As Lunn explained at a talk in 1978, aptly titled “The Creation of Rarity,” “Most people would only buy *Moonrise* if they were going to buy one Ansel Adams, and if they wanted that print, they could bloody well pay for it.”⁴³⁴ Most important of all, the supply of original Ansel Adams prints was finally and definitively limited.

Aside from his portfolios and, later, his museum sets, Adams did not actually create limited editions of his individual images. He seems to have been pragmatic but ambivalent about the practice, acknowledging in 1974 that “art is a business—whether we like the idea or not,” and that collectors often expect “the element of scarcity or limitation.”⁴³⁵ At the same time, he noted, “it is my private opinion that the negative should not be destroyed,” while continuing, “I also realize that the pressure for limited editions is very strong and often justified in many ways.”⁴³⁶ Certainly, most obviously in the case of *Moonrise*, “the most popular art photo ever,” there were instances where Adams made hundreds of prints on demand over several decades.⁴³⁷ But what truly ignited the market for his photographs, and what finally allowed him to make a comfortable living, was his decision to stop printing and thus, after years of plenitude, to create a sense of rarity for his work. Adams in this sense is both a poster-child for the growing business

⁴³² Quasha, “Photography as a Business,” 9.

⁴³³ Quasha, 9. Quasha includes a price chart in her thesis, showing Lunn’s schedule of prices for a sample of Adams’s images from 1976 to 1979. See Quasha, “Photography as a Business,” v. See also Gray, “Print Price Information on Ansel Adams’ Prints,” Ansel Adams Archive.

⁴³⁴ Longwell, “Creating Rarity,” 88.

⁴³⁵ Ansel Adams, “Commentary: Ansel Adams on Limited Editions of Photographs,” in *20th Century American Photography* (Kansas City, MO: Friends of Art Sales and Rental Gallery, 1974), n.p.

⁴³⁶ Adams, “Commentary.”

⁴³⁷ Richard A. Shaffer, “Investing in Photos Spreads, But It Has Its Negative Aspects,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 7, 1977, 1.

acumen of the 1970s photography market, and an unusual exception. His great fame and the corresponding hunger for his photographs meant that he could continue to sell his prints without following the specific conventions of limited editions. On the other hand, his limited edition portfolios were an important source of income, along with the windfall that followed his decision to stop printing. Adams himself remarked in 1978 that although he had “probably sold more prints from a few negatives than anybody I know of in modern times,” aside from those few exceptions it was actually his portfolio prints that he had sold the most of.⁴³⁸

Adams’s decision to put a cap on his output also seemed to raise the rest of the market for contemporary photography up with it, and to suggest a path for dealers and photographers alike. The money that Lunn made from his investments in Adams’s work allowed him to finance major investments in other photographers, including Walker Evans, Robert Frank, and Yosuf Karsh, and to accordingly raise prices and bolster the market for their work as well.⁴³⁹ For Jill Quasha, the success of Turnage and Lunn’s work with Adams was directly “responsible for the rise in limited editions and the growing recognition by photographers that collectors are concerned with the number of prints that exist.”⁴⁴⁰ Furthermore, she remarked over twenty years later, editioning “made photography a business.

There are certain rules in business. The most important one is how do you create value? You have to figure out how to create value. It’s really simple. There’s nothing complicated about it. By limiting editions, you’re creating rarity. And rarity is the key behind price rise.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁸ Ansel Adams, Ruth Teiser, and Catherine Harroun, *Ansel Adams: Conversations with Ansel Adams* (Berkeley, CA: Regional Oral History Office, 1978), 534.

⁴³⁹ Jim Powell, “The Camera: A Financial Focus,” *American Way*, January 1980, 24. See also series I, boxes 18 and 75, and series IV, box 107, Harry Lunn Papers, 004.M.17, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California; “Graphics International Ltd., Lunn Gallery Inc., Executive Summary,” unpublished manuscript, August 1980, series 2, box 18, folder 23, LIGHT Gallery Archive, AG 194, Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona.

⁴⁴⁰ Quasha, “Photography as a Business,” 35.

⁴⁴¹ David Walker, “Make Yourself Scarce?,” *Photo District News* 23, no. 2 (February 2003): 26.

As part of his 1978 “Creation of Rarity” talk, Lunn in turn noted that Ansel Adams, “in this case as always, is a flagship leading the rest of the fleet.”⁴⁴² Lunn’s exposition on rarity capped the three-day program of the “Photographic Collecting, Past and Present, in the United States, Canada, and Europe” symposium held from October 12–14, 1978 at the George Eastman House in Rochester, New York. The symposium is especially noteworthy for catalyzing the formation of the Association of International Photography Art Dealers (AIPAD) the following year, with Daniel Wolf as its first president.⁴⁴³ English curator Mark Haworth-Booth, whose coverage of the event appeared in both *Aperture* and *Camerawork*, reported that several dealers in attendance, including the Los Angeles gallerist Stephen White, were upset that “the lectures were taking up too much time,” and that attendees were not given sufficient opportunity to visit the dealers’ stalls that had also been set up as part of the symposium.⁴⁴⁴ Despite this element of disjunction between the priorities of organizers and dealers, the event did include talks aimed at the business side of photography collecting.⁴⁴⁵ Although much of the program comprised overviews of private, public, and corporate collections by their respective stewards, attendees also heard from Charles Traub, then director of LIGHT Gallery; lawyer John Sherman, on “the

⁴⁴² Longwell, “Creating Rarity,” 88.

⁴⁴³ Wolf got his start as a young person selling vintage photographs outside of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. He went on to run his own successful gallery for several years, but arguably gained the most notoriety for secretly orchestrating the sale of several major photography collections to the J. Paul Getty Museum in 1984. Ben Lifson, “Portrait of the Dealer as a Young Collector,” *Village Voice*, December 4, 1978; Peter C. Jones, “High Times and Misdemeanors,” in “Connoisseurs and Collections,” special issue, *Aperture*, no. 124 (summer 1991): 69.

⁴⁴⁴ Mark Haworth-Booth, “Wheeling and Dealing at Rochester,” *Aperture*, no. 82 (Spring 1979): 2–7; Haworth-Booth, “The Collector,” *Camerawork*, no. 15 (September 1979): 12–13. Despite their different titles and different images, the text of these two articles is identical. In 1979, Haworth-Booth was the first Assistant Keeper of Photographs at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and *Camerawork* was a periodical published by the Half Moon Photography Workshop in London. For more information on Lunn’s talk, see also Longwell, “Creating Rarity;” Notes and related ephemera, series VII, box 182, folder 1, Harry Lunn Papers, 004.M.17, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California.

⁴⁴⁵ According to Robert Doherty, GEH’s director at the time, the aim of the symposium was to “provide intellectual support for decisions made in the marketplace.” Haworth-Booth, “Wheeling and Dealing,” 2.

income- and estate-tax aspects of collecting;” and from Lunn, eventually joined onstage by dealer George Rinhart, on creating rarity.⁴⁴⁶ Remarking later on Lunn’s comment about Ansel Adams as a “flagship” for the market, Haworth-Booth mused,

Indeed, what benefits the flagship may put some breeze in the sails of every vessel in the armada of photographic artists. As we listened in the darkened auditorium, an image shot onto the screen of my inner eye. I remembered an illustration from my childhood copy of *Gulliver’s Travels*. There was the Lilliputian armada, and leading them through the seas on a hundred threads was the wading figure of Lemuel Gulliver. If Adams is the flagship, there are no prizes for guessing who is Gulliver.⁴⁴⁷

The emergence in the 1970s of limiting print numbers as a standard practice for working photographers was overtly linked to the mechanisms of the market, and was indeed a major factor, along with the coinage of *vintage*, in its success. But although limited editions and *vintage* share a common concern with scarcity, their more subtle implications diverge significantly and point up different facets of the burgeoning market for photographs.

Connoisseurs and Investors

As we saw in previous chapters, the notion of vintage prints was central to establishing photographs as collectible objects with diverse and valuable material qualities. The romantic emphasis on the artist’s hand and the original moment of creation, along with the perceived urgency of historical recovery, fostered a sophisticated level of connoisseurship among a

⁴⁴⁶ Haworth-Booth, “Wheeling and Dealing;” Joyce Menschel, “Photographic Collecting: Symposium.” Speakers included James Borcoman of the National Gallery of Canada, Lorraine Monk of the National Film Board of Canada, Van Deren Coke from the Art Museum at the University of New Mexico, Richard Pare from the Seagram’s Collection; and Pierre Apraxine of the Gilman Paper Company Collection; as well as private collectors Daniela Palazzoli, Sam Wagstaff, Arnold Crane, and Arturo Schwartz. In addition, Beaumont Newhall provided the keynote on museum collections of photography in the early twentieth century, and Helen Gee spoke about her experience selling photographs at the Limelight Gallery in the 1950s.

⁴⁴⁷ Haworth-Booth, “Wheeling and Dealing,” 6.

cognoscenti literally invested in collecting and preserving the medium's past. The appeal of limited editions, and of portfolios, meanwhile, was somewhat different. Jill Quasha gestures to this difference when she notes that limited editions "made photography a business." Generally speaking, the *raisons d'être* of editions are marketability and a concern with investment value. In traditional printmaking, there is a material reason for limiting a print run: the fact that print matrices wear down with use. But the hundredth print in an edition of photographs will generally be just as fine as the first, as negatives don't tend to wear out from use in the same way that printing plates do. As Richard Blodgett put it in 1979, "editions have nothing to do with photographic artistry and are instead primarily a marketing concept, designed to offer some assurance of rarity—or perhaps merely an appearance of rarity—to nervous buyers."⁴⁴⁸

The photography market underwent an obvious evolution as the 1970s wore on, in some ways a symptom of larger economic forces and trends. While I don't wish to romanticize the early years of the photo boom, it is clear that those who threw themselves into the fray at this point acted in the face of widespread skepticism, if not outright dismissal. Photography was lucrative for almost no one, and most of those who chose to embrace it, whether as dealers, collectors, scholars, or indeed as photographers, did so out of a largely personal interest, even a sense of responsibility toward a medium they felt was egregiously undervalued, and whose history was in danger of being lost. Scholar Eugenia Parry described the ardor of these early enthusiasts, of which she was one, in an essay on the celebrated collector Sam Wagstaff:

In Paris [Wagstaff] arrived, ready to hunt and buy photographs. In the process he learned about photography. Not from the standard texts, but from conversations with antiquarian booksellers, André Jammes on the rue Gozlin, and dealers in Asian antiquities, Gerard Levy and François Lepage, on the rue de Beaune. Photography was their backroom passion. They'd been filling wine cellars and storerooms with photographs for years.

⁴⁴⁸ Blodgett, "Photographs: A Collector's Guide," 28.

From these lesser-known images they'd been creating their own histories of photography.⁴⁴⁹

The “eye club” that Parry describes, the group of collectors and enthusiasts who haunted the auctions and flea markets of Paris, London, and New York, was responsible for the establishment of sprawling, personal, and idiosyncratic collections of photographs long before such objects had any real market value.⁴⁵⁰ In contrast, curator and scholar Marvin Heiferman, who worked at LIGHT Gallery from 1971 to 1974, recently recalled an anecdote that illustrates the sometimes dispiriting public indifference to photography in those years. He was sitting at the front desk at LIGHT, he says, when “somebody opened the door and they stuck their head in.

And they looked down the wall and there were forty frames, the same size, with gray rectangles in the middle of white mats in aluminum frames, and they said, “Oh, photographs,” and they never got out of the elevator.⁴⁵¹

While it took time for photography to spark the imagination of the wider public, those early years were marked by the almost feverish dedication of a small coterie of like-minded individuals. As the market expanded, public interest in photography broadened exponentially, but was not necessarily matched by a corresponding depth of knowledge. One gets a strong sense of this shift by returning to the “Photographs & Professionals” roundtable series in *The Print Collector's Newsletter*, the first installment of which I explored in Chapter Two. That first session was held in 1973, and the three subsequent conversations appeared at five-year intervals thereafter, in 1978, 1983, and 1988. The final conversation comprised an almost entirely different group of interlocutors and offers a quite distinct view of the photography market.⁴⁵² But

⁴⁴⁹ Eugenia Parry, “Penitent,” in *The Thrill of the Chase*, 38.

⁴⁵⁰ See Seniuta, “Histoire Du Eye Club.”

⁴⁵¹ Marvin Heiferman, conversation with the author, June 5, 2019.

⁴⁵² Bunnell et al., “Photographs & Professionals IV.” In addition to Bunnell, this convening included curator Marvin Heiferman, photographer Duane Michaels, artist Sarah Charlesworth, photography dealer

the first three sessions are an excellent window onto the subtle and overt shifts in the photography market—and the photography “scene” as a whole—during this ten-year span. With the caveat that these conversations certainly represent the specific viewpoints of a small group of people, the question of audience demographic and engagement emerges as a prominent theme. Peter Bunnell asks in the 1978 conversation, for example, “Taking our five-year time span, is there a greater public awareness and sophistication or knowledge today than five years ago?” To which Lee Witkin replies at length and with obvious exasperation,

There’s less, actually. It’s very discouraging. The first five years I had the gallery, the people who came to look and to buy were a very pre-educated, concerned, caring audience. [...] A lot of those collectors were priced out of the market, and today we get a whole new breed of “interested” people who know nothing about photographs, nothing about the history of photography. They think that maybe it’s a good investment, or if they have something up on their walls their friends might think better of them. [...] I have found dealing with these people loveless and frustrating. They want you to give them all the answers. They want guarantees of a good investment. [...] So photography’s larger audience, far from being more sophisticated, is less sophisticated.⁴⁵³

To which Lucien Goldschmidt immediately responds, “I think that one can generally confirm that there are more money interests in the market. Hence there are more people to whom I then am led to say ‘Look, if it’s only for investment that you’re doing this, then I will not be able to help you.’”⁴⁵⁴ Witkin’s take in 1983 was much the same. Although by that time the market—both for photographs and for art in general—was experiencing a temporary decline, he opens the conversation by noting, “I think the whole feeling for art has changed. Art has become big business.”⁴⁵⁵

Larry Miller, and art writer and editor Ingrid Sischy. This new cast of characters and the much later date of the conversation gives rise to a much more extensive consideration of the relationship between photography and contemporary art.

⁴⁵³ Bunnell et al., “Photographs & Professionals: Same Time, Five Years,” 80–81.

⁴⁵⁴ Bunnell et al., 80–81.

⁴⁵⁵ Bunnell et al., “Photographs & Professionals III,” 82.

Admittedly, Witkin's pessimism and frustration with the photography market may have been especially personal. Not all of the other participants in these conversations wholeheartedly agree with his position, but as evinced by Goldschmidt's comment above, the general sense of the market's rapid commercialization appears to hold true. This may indeed have been an inevitable development as the market and its attendant institutions became more established, and as we saw in Chapter Two, this shift is reflected in the collecting guides that were published later in the decade. No longer content to focus on the history of the medium and to broadly identify major collecting areas, these later guides by the likes of Blodgett, Landt and Liesl Dennis, and even Witkin himself, are much more methodical about laying out rubrics of value, and grappling with the all-important issue of rarity. One culmination of this trend was the 1981 publication of *The Photographic Art Market* by the historian and market analyst Peter Hastings Falk,⁴⁵⁶ whose stated purpose was to "survey the economic development of the photography market during the past decade in order to give prospective investors an overview on the current status of collecting."⁴⁵⁷ In his foreword, Falk distinguishes his book from those slightly earlier examples, explaining that his intended audience comprises collectors already availing themselves of existing source material on the medium's history, and that *The Photographic Art Market* is "centered mainly on a market analysis."⁴⁵⁸ He notes that "the latter half of [the 1970s] saw increasing public attention turn to the fine arts as a viable alternate form of tangible investment," and while he acknowledges the necessity for collectors to be conversant with the history of art

⁴⁵⁶ Falk began publishing art historical reference guides in the late 1970s. He followed *The Photographic Art Market* a decade later with the even more comprehensive *Print Price Index*. See Peter H. Falk, *Print Price Index for 1990–1991 Auction Season* (Connecticut: Sound View Press, 1991).

⁴⁵⁷ Peter H. Falk, *The Photographic Art Market* (New York: Falk-Leeds International, Inc, 1981), vii.

⁴⁵⁸ Falk, *The Photographic Art Market*, vii, viii.

and photography, such knowledge is primarily in the service of ascertaining the monetary value and investment potential of prospective purchases.

Falk notes that across the auctions of the 1975–1976 season, there was “a great influx of speculative investment capital into the photography market,” a development that he says moved “photography collecting out of infancy and into adolescence.”⁴⁵⁹ By the beginning of the next decade, although rife with ups and downs, the photography market had expanded even further. Falk points, in fact, to a “cyclical pattern of development: the pre-1975 plateau, the 1976 boom, the 1977–1979 plateau, the fall 1979 boom, and the current [as of 1981] plateau. These developmental cycles are actually subcycles of a general upward trend.”⁴⁶⁰ In addition to his analysis of the photography market at large, including speculation about its future, *The Photographic Art Market* offers a detailed rubric for determining value. His photography grading system outlines four categories: aesthetic quality, physical condition, rarity, and photographer status. Unsurprisingly, the system assigns the most points for rare vintage prints in fine condition, of recognized aesthetic value, by canonized masters of the medium. Falk is clear that this rubric favors historical photographers whose work is firmly ensconced in existing scholarship. “In all of the fine arts,” he writes, “works by young contemporaries are the most speculative. This area should be approached only by the collector who is buying for aesthetic reasons and remains unconcerned with liquidity restrictions.”⁴⁶¹ Accordingly, in his chapter on “selecting for the portfolio,” which briskly summarizes a short-list of blue chip photographers from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Falk pointedly excludes not only emerging

⁴⁵⁹ Falk, *The Photographic Art Market*, 5.

⁴⁶⁰ Falk, *The Photographic Art Market*, 22.

⁴⁶¹ Falk, *The Photographic Art Market*, 37.

photographers but even the majority of well-known older living photographers.⁴⁶² Essentially, he feels, the jury is still out on whether their work will stand the test of time.

A few points emerge from this brief consideration of Falk's book. First, we see the persistent divide between historical and contemporary photography in terms of marketability and supposed investment value. We also see that the surge in photography scholarship that characterized the photo boom also quickly became the foundation of the market, offering justification for hierarchies of value such as those laid out by Falk. The rediscovery and canonization of historical photographers, and even the valorization of select living practitioners—some of whom had been toiling in relative obscurity for decades—were crucial both to the history of photography as an academic field, and to the development of the market. Certainly this also begs the question of which practices and practitioners were left out of such milieux. In a 1970 exhibition review of Bruce Davidson's photographs of Harlem, A. D. Coleman wrote, "It is little short of scandalous that the Museum of Modern Art has never given a one-man show to a non-white photographer, for there are many at least as talented as some of those photographers the Museum has chosen to show over the years."⁴⁶³ In 1983, curator William Olander emphasized the exclusion of Black photographers from the emerging discourses around the medium's history as well as the market for photographs. He noted that the

⁴⁶² Falk, *The Photographic Art Market*, 37–39. The list of contemporary (1940s-1970s) photographers Falk does deign to include is brief, and by 1981 not all of them were still living: Ansel Adams, Diane Arbus, Wynn Bullock, Robert Frank, Irving Penn, W. Eugene Smith, and Minor White. Notably, with the exception of Diane Arbus (who had died a decade before), all of the photographers listed here are white American men. Meanwhile, somewhat arbitrarily, Falk cites Richard Avedon, Harry Callahan, Bill Brandt, Aaron Siskind, Paul Caponigro, Lisette Model, Barbara Morgan, Paul Caponigro, George Tice, Frederick Sommer, Eliot Porter, Duane Michals, and Arthur Rothstein as photographers who have "produced some remarkably fine work" but whose market value remains uncertain and are thus not yet appropriate for a "conservative acquisition plan."

⁴⁶³ A. D. Coleman, "Two Critics Look at Davidson's 'East 100th St.,'" *The New York Times*, October 11, 1970.

commonly cited exceptions to this rule were a small handful of Black male photographers, including Gordon Parks, Roy DeCarava, and James VanDerZee. But, “apart from recognition,” he continued, “what this accomplishes, in many cases, is a neutralization of the black (social) character of the work.”⁴⁶⁴ In addition to the elision of Black photographers from exhibitions and galleries, scholar Carla Williams has pointed out that “fewer than ten photography books appeared by or about black photographers prior to 1970,” and that perhaps twenty-eight were published in the first part of the decade.⁴⁶⁵ Given that rubrics like Falk’s lean heavily on existing scholarship and a somewhat tautological understanding of photographers’ “status,” it is clear that the absence of institutional support for Black artists fed directly into their purported lack of value in the context of the market. Thus, in addition to the questions raised about *vintage* in Chapter Two, it is always worth stressing that such understandings of market value are highly selective and contingent. Coleman and Olander’s comments were made at the outset and in the immediate aftermath of the photo boom, respectively, but the exclusion of Black and other marginalized communities of artists from both the market and the historical record is still something with which the field continues to contend.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶⁴ William Olander, “Introduction,” in Allen Memorial Art Museum, *Contemporary Afro-American Photography: [Exhibition, Oct. 6-Nov. 27, 1983]* Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College. (Oberlin, Ohio: Oberlin College, 1983), 5.

⁴⁶⁵ Carla Williams, “The Black Photographers Annual,” *Aperture*, no. 223 (2016): 31. Williams’s assessment comes from her article on the short-lived *Black Photographers Annual*, the four volumes of which appeared between 1973 and 1980. Published by New York photographer and editor Joe Crawford, the *Annual* was dedicated to showcasing the work of Black photographers at a time when very few other outlets did so, and none with any regularity. See *The Black Photographers Annual 1973*, forward by Toni Morrison and introduction by Clayton Riley (Brooklyn, NY: Black Photographers Annual, Inc., 1973); *The Black Photographers Annual, Volume 2* (Brooklyn, NY: Black Photographers Annual, Inc., 1974); *The Black Photographers Annual, Volume 3*, foreword by Gordon Parks and introduction by James Baldwin (Brooklyn, NY: Black Photographers Annual, Inc., 1976); *The Black Photographers Annual, Volume 4*, introduction by John A. Williams (Brooklyn, NY: Another View, Inc., 1980).

⁴⁶⁶ Scholarly and institutional attention to the work of Black photographers has, to an extent, proliferated in recent years, but among the earliest major publications in this area were Valencia Hollins Coar, ed., *A Century of Black Photographers: 1840–1960* (Providence, RI: Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of

What we also see is the growing commercialization of the market by the end of the 1970s. While this observation might seem redundant, again the point is that some early dealers, like Lee Witkin, took umbrage with the emergence of a class of buyers who seemed less interested in, or at least less informed about, photography for its own sake. Of course, Witkin may represent an extreme view; other members of the *PCN* roundtable had more measured perspectives. Ronald Feldman, for example, who dealt in a broader range of art, comments, “I find the audience for art is larger than it’s ever been, and I’m not saying that it’s more educated or as educated, but it’s large and a lot of people really do want to know.”⁴⁶⁷ Peter Bunnell meanwhile points out that an important facet of the market’s expansion is actually the proliferation of available information, including first-hand access to both original photographs and high-quality reproductions even in such commercial vehicles as auction catalogues.⁴⁶⁸ He calls for his interlocutors to “recognize that for all the years we were in the so-called wilderness, all we wanted were two things—acceptance and respect—and in a materialist society, how do you display that? You acquire it. You deal with works in monetary terms.”⁴⁶⁹

It is also clear that by this time we can see a kind of split in the market, not only between older and newer photography, but between those collectors we might term connoisseurs and those who were first and foremost investors. Connoisseurs represent the relatively small group of aficionados who were driven by their personal interest, and who took particular pleasure in both

Design, 1983); Deborah Willis, *Black Photographers, 1840–1940: An Illustrated Bio-Bibliography*, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, v. 401 (New York: Garland Pub, 1985); Deborah Willis, *An Illustrated Bio-Bibliography of Black Photographers, 1940–1988*, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, v. 760 (New York: Garland, 1989).

⁴⁶⁷ Bunnell et al., “Photographs & Professionals III,” 82.

⁴⁶⁸ Bunnell indeed made a similar point five years earlier as well, commenting that “some of the finest scholarship and cataloguing in the medium is being done by the dealers and their staffs. [...] The resource documentation of that material is staggering, and it’s been done on behalf of the commercial enterprises.” Bunnell et al., “Photographs & Professionals: Same Time, Five Years,” 82.

⁴⁶⁹ Bunnell et al., “Photographs & Professionals III,” 84.

historical knowledge and a finely honed material appreciation for the medium. Many, although certainly not all, of the members of this group were likely those who either had deep roots in some aspect of photography or got in early, so to speak, at the outset of (or even before) the photo boom. On the other hand, as described variously by Witkin, Goldschmidt, and even Peter Falk, there were those who arrived on the scene a bit later, and whose broader interest in collecting photography may have been more skewed toward financial considerations. I am cautious about overgeneralizing either of these groups, or suggesting that there was no overlap between them. Harry Lunn, for example, might be said to represent both camps, as both a genuine enthusiast and an exceptionally calculating businessman. But it seems that as the market evolved it inevitably expanded well beyond the initial coterie of passionate acolytes, and began to draw in a much wider but perhaps less deeply committed audience. Marvin Heiferman, again, has remarked on this in general terms, noting that “a big market is not about connoisseurship. Connoisseurship is for connoisseurs, and connoisseurs are a tiny bunch of people who love [photography] and care about it in a different kind of way.”⁴⁷⁰ Using slightly different language, LIGHT Gallery owner Tennyson Schad remarked on the phenomenon as well, noting that “the photography investor and the photography collector are two different breeds,” although, like Falk, he adds that “the successful investor should have a touch of the collector.”⁴⁷¹ The splashy coverage of the photo boom in the popular press catalyzed a growing audience for photography during this period, and encouraged public interest in photography’s potential investment value. I also don’t intend to imply that everyone who became interested in photography at this time was wealthy, or that they didn’t care about what they bought. Simply, what I want to underscore here is that the photo boom, especially in its later years, saw the emergence of a newer, larger, more

⁴⁷⁰ Marvin Heiferman, conversation with the author, June 5, 2019.

⁴⁷¹ Tennyson Schad, “Shooting from the Hip,” 221.

diverse, often less rigorously informed, and perhaps less confident, public for the medium. In addition, as we see from Falk and others, those who were primarily interested in photography for investment purposes would have been encouraged to put their money on those photographers who were both famous and dead. Younger, or even just *living*, photographers remained a harder sell throughout the decade, even as the buying public grew exponentially. And it is in this context that we see the practice of limited editions and the publication of portfolios really take hold.

Limited Edition Prints

Put simply, limited edition prints and portfolios were not necessarily aimed at connoisseurs or experts in photography. Their essential function was to placate a wary public and to sell prints, not to appeal to the elite enthusiasts whose interest lay in the nuances of printing or the discovery of historical material. As dealers and the public both became increasingly attuned to the importance of rarity for establishing value, limited editions seemed a logical approach for marketing new work by living photographers. It also, in fact, served to validate later or posthumous reprints of historical work, which precariously straddled the line between rarity and multiplicity. Older photographers—or their estates—sought to respond to the sudden surge in demand despite the fact that for so many years they had produced very few saleable prints. They also needed to allay the fear that they would go on making these new prints indefinitely. But limited editions have not been without their pitfalls and detractors.

Writing in 1987, Stuart Bennet offers two divergent opinions. The first, from Harry Lunn, is that “if a collector is faced with the choice of two images he likes relatively well and ‘X’ is unlimited and ‘Y’ is in an edition of five, or ten, or twenty-five, ‘Y’ will get sold.” The second,

from Sue Davies, then curator of the Photographers' Gallery, London, is that editions ultimately "only benefit the resale market, not the photographer or the first-time buyer," both of whom are better served by the print-on-demand model of production.⁴⁷² Bennett himself seems to side with Lunn and comes down on the side of editions, suggesting that "even the first-time buyer wants his work of art to be rare and desirable: how better than for the edition to be known and finite, thus forcing subsequent purchasers to turn to those perceptive enough to have bought ahead of the market."⁴⁷³ Indeed, here we also see the confluence of limited editions and *vintage*, as Bennett points out that photographers can, if they so choose, print subsequent editions in another size or medium, but that "these later editions will never have the same desirability as the definitive 'vintage' edition."⁴⁷⁴ (I will return to this question of multiple editions.) His assertion leaves out, however, the fact that many editions have been made of much earlier work, and thus can scarcely be considered vintage.⁴⁷⁵

Photographers have been among those most immediately affected by the decision to produce or eschew limited editions, as it directly concerns both their livelihoods and their working practices. Writing in 2003, writer David Walker noted that then-70-year-old photographer Paul Caponigro adhered to the earlier model of printing to order, a choice that his son John Paul believed had kept the older photographer "chained to the darkroom" and in thrall to his earlier, more popular work, at the expense of artistic development.⁴⁷⁶ At the same time, John Paul admitted that there was little consensus among dealers or the buying public about

⁴⁷² Stuart Bennett, *How to Buy Photographs*, 95. Lunn's remark was made apparently ten years earlier, at a symposium in 1977.

⁴⁷³ Bennett, 95.

⁴⁷⁴ Bennett, 95.

⁴⁷⁵ For example, Gisèle Freund's 1977 limited edition portfolio of her portraits of early twentieth-century notables, including Virginia Woolf and Jean Cocteau, published by Graphics International, Ltd.; or Arthur Rothstein's self-published 1976 portfolio of a selection of his FSA images from 1935–1939.

⁴⁷⁶ Walker, "Make Yourself Scarce?," 25.

whether limited editions are necessary. Further, even though John Paul decided to limit his output, he set his edition size quite high, at fifty prints, and didn't print them all at once, thus reserving his right to reinterpret his negatives over time. It is worth pausing on this issue of creativity and reinterpretation, as in fact the prints that make up a limited edition are often assumed to be relatively uniform. In the case of traditional printmaking, an edition of prints is commonly made all at once, rather than over a significant span of years. In photography too, this is the ideal, although pragmatic realities—a lack of money up front, for example—have sometimes thwarted photographers from printing the full run of their editions at one time.⁴⁷⁷ Nonetheless, even in such cases the goal is generally to produce a consistent edition of prints that all look the same, are printed on the same kind of paper, at the same size, and so on. This may not bother collectors who are chiefly interested in obtaining a copy of a particular image and are concerned above all else with the perception of rarity. But it may be a significant deterrent to connoisseurs who revel in material specificity and have learned to detect minute differences between prints. David Walker cites the Santa Fe gallery owner and photographer Janet Russek on this point. “The collector in her is also frustrated,” he writes,

Part of the pleasure of collecting prints by, say, Paul Strand is comparing the platinum to a silver version, a glossy and matte version, or a print made early in life to one of the same image made much later. “I don't necessarily want to buy the same print you bought,” Russek says. “These modern contemporary editions limit a collector's choice. The artists do an edition of six, and the prints all look the same.”⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁷ To cite just one example, Berenice Abbott produced her portfolio of posthumous reprints from Eugène Atget's negatives, an edition of 100 copies, over a span of nearly twenty years, for want of both funding and buyers. Kalkstein, “Inside the Box,” 59–60. I obtained this information directly from scholar Julia Van Haften, who has since published her expansive biography of Abbott: Julia Van Haften, *Berenice Abbott: A Life in Photography* (New York: WW Norton & Company, Inc, 2018). It is also significant that while Abbott first announced the Atget portfolio in 1956, it was not until the middle of the photo boom, in 1974, that she finally completed the full edition.

⁴⁷⁸ Walker, “Make Yourself Scarce?,” 27.

And while we have seen Sue Davies’s stance that new buyers are not well-served by limited editions, Christie’s head of photography Leila Buckjune—commenting nearly twenty years later—in fact asserts that “it is especially the newcomers to the photographic print market who find comfort in limited editions.”⁴⁷⁹ Such newcomers, whether in the 1970s or more recently, have often been less likely to prioritize the technical nuances of fine printing, or to track the evolution of a photographer’s style and materials over time. Instead, they may be more inclined to simply collect the images that appeal to them, especially when “comforted” by a stated edition size. In a way, this puts limited editions closer to the pre-photo boom conception of photography as simply a way of identically reproducing images, albeit within the new context of the market. Limited editions have certainly served to meet a level of demand for original prints that simply didn’t exist before the photo boom. But while ostensibly aiming to create rarity, limited editions have also had the opposite effect of generating a glut of copies in comparison to the numbers that existed prior to the 1970s.

Limited Edition Portfolios

As limited edition prints became more ubiquitous over the course of the photo boom, there was a corresponding rise in the specific format of limited edition portfolios. As early as June of 1971, Beaumont Newhall and Van Deren Coke, in their joint editorial in *Image* magazine, declared presciently that “It looks as if the 1970s may be known in photographic history as the decade of the portfolios if we can judge by the number of them being announced.”⁴⁸⁰ In 1973, a feature article by Jacob Deschin more cautiously queried, “Photographic Portfolios: They’re In, But Will

⁴⁷⁹ Walker, 27.

⁴⁸⁰ Newhall Coke, “Editorial,” 1.

They Sell?”⁴⁸¹ Portfolios are in one sense an elaboration of the limited edition print, but they also have their own history and their own characteristics. Broadly speaking, photography portfolios have been produced for nearly as long as the medium has existed. Early practitioners including Maxime du Camp, Francis Bedford, Linnaeus Tripe, and Eadweard Muybridge all created portfolios of original photographs or photomechanical reproductions, although the particulars of these publications vary widely.⁴⁸² In some instances, both bound and portfolio formats were created from the same body of work. Maxime du Camp, for example, preceded his 1852 book *Égypte, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie* with a small number of privately printed portfolios—containing 174 photographs, as opposed to the publication’s 125—in 1849–1850 under the title *Égypte, Nubie, Syrie: Paysages et Monuments*.⁴⁸³ Other portfolios were subscription-based, such that the contents of each portfolio might differ according to the subscriber’s preferences. This was the case with Francis Bedford’s 1862 project *Mr. Francis Bedford’s Photographic Pictures Taken During the Tour in the East of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales*. Bedford’s London exhibition of 172 albumen prints of images taken during his four-month tour of the Middle East and North Africa was accompanied both by a catalogue and by a set of three portfolios.⁴⁸⁴

[Figure 64] Meanwhile Eadweard Muybridge’s famous *Animal Locomotion* collotypes,

⁴⁸¹ Jacob Deschin, “Photographic Portfolios: They’re In, But Will They Sell?,” *Popular Photography*, April 1973, 93–97, 118–119.

⁴⁸² For more information about the history of photography portfolios, including the examples discussed here, see Kalkstein, “Inside the Box,” 11–19.

⁴⁸³ The Metropolitan Museum of Art holds a copy of this portfolio, 2005.100.376.1–174. However, in this and indeed in most instances, museums and publications tend not to digitize portfolios as whole objects. Instead, searching for such portfolios in collection databases more often yields images of individual sheets as though they were simply stand-alone photographs. As a result it is difficult at this stage to provide illustrations of these historical objects in their entirety.

⁴⁸⁴ Sophie Gordon, *Cairo to Constantinople: Francis Bedford’s photographs of the Middle East*, introduction by John McCarthy (London: Royal Collection, 2013), 46–48.

announced in 1887, were available both in bound volumes and as portfolios of loose prints that customers could select from a master list of 781 plates.⁴⁸⁵

Many examples of early portfolios comprised discrete bodies of work, most often travel and architectural views. Whether these “editions” were limited or open-ended varied, but few, if any, of these examples would have been explicitly numbered.⁴⁸⁶ Nonetheless, it is clear that the general practice of publishing and distributing sets of original photographic prints has a long history in both the United States and Europe. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly under the influence of Pictorialism, we begin to see more recognizably modern photography portfolios by the likes of such aesthetically minded practitioners as Alfred Stieglitz and Edward Sheriff Curtis. Stieglitz, for example, published two volumes of a Pictorialist group portfolio called *American Pictorial Photography* in 1899 and 1900, respectively. Curtis, meanwhile, is best known for *The North American Indian*, published between 1907 and 1930. Each of the project’s twenty generously illustrated volumes of text was accompanied by a large portfolio of photogravures. [Figure 65] It is my contention that these are among the earliest photography portfolios to be explicitly issued as numbered limited editions,⁴⁸⁷ perhaps in keeping with the increased popularity of such practices spurred by the English etching revival around the same time.

⁴⁸⁵ Eadweard Muybridge, *Muybridge’s Complete Human and Animal Locomotion*, vol. 3 (New York: Dover, 1979), 1586.

⁴⁸⁶ Each copy of Linnaeus Tripe’s (1822–1902) portfolio *Burma Views*, comprising 120 albumen prints and published in an edition of fifty, did however include a signed and dated statement by the photographer. Janet Dewan, *The Photographs of Linnaeus Tripe: A Catalogue Raisonné* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 2003), 210.

⁴⁸⁷ Each series of *American Pictorial Photography* was issued in an edition of 150. *The North American Indian* was intended as an edition of 500, but only around half were ever completed.

Meanwhile, throughout the first half of the twentieth century, a scattering of American modernist photographers including Ansel Adams, Paul Strand, Brett Weston, Minor White, and, a little later, George Tice, each published portfolios with many of the hallmarks of the form that would become *de rigueur* in the 1970s. These were signed, numbered sets of approximately ten to fifteen original prints, housed in custom-made boxes or folders, sometimes matted or separated with interleaving paper, and often accompanied by title lists, introductions—perhaps by noted scholars or curators—and colophons, many of which assured collectors that the prints therein had been made to the highest archival standards. [Figure 66] As mentioned earlier, Adams was an exceptionally early adopter of the portfolio format, publishing *Parmelian Prints of the High Sierras* in 1927, and continuing to publish portfolios regularly until the mid 1970s.⁴⁸⁸ Adams’s nemesis, the Pictorialist holdover William Mortensen, also published a portfolio of bromoil prints, *Pictorial Photography*, in 1935. Brett Weston’s first portfolio, *San Francisco*, was self-published in 1938 in an edition of twenty-five. He self-published nine more portfolios between 1949 and 1977.⁴⁸⁹ Paul Strand published his portfolio of fine photogravures, *Photographs of Mexico*, in 1940 in an edition of 250, and reissued it in an edition of 1000 in 1967 as *The Mexican Portfolio*, a rare example of a reprinted portfolio.⁴⁹⁰ Minor White published *Sequence 6* in 1951 in an edition of twenty-five.⁴⁹¹ George Tice published his first portfolio, *The Amish Portfolio*, in 1968 and his second, *Trees*, in 1969, both in editions of fifty.⁴⁹² As noted previously, Brett Weston also printed his father Edward Weston’s *50th Anniversary Portfolio* in

⁴⁸⁸ See footnote 420 for a complete list of Adams’s portfolios.

⁴⁸⁹ Witkin and London, *The Photograph Collector’s Guide*, 297.

⁴⁹⁰ Kalkstein, *Inside the Box*, 33–34; Katherine Ware, “Photographs of Mexico, 1940,” in James Krippner, *Paul Strand in Mexico* (México, DF: Fundación Televisa; New York: Aperture Foundation: Distributed by D.A.P., 2010), 267–273.

⁴⁹¹ Witkin and London, *The Photograph Collector’s Guide*, 298.

⁴⁹² Witkin and London, 295–296.

1952 in an edition of 100. The elder Weston is also unusual for having briefly experimented with editioning and numbering his individual prints in the 1930s, and even trying to sell them on a subscription plan. This enterprise was short-lived, and he never came even close to completing any of his projected editions of fifty prints.⁴⁹³ [Figure 67]

The 1970s, however, saw an explosion of limited edition photography portfolios unprecedented at any other time in the medium's history.⁴⁹⁴ But as A. D. Coleman has pointed out, "Neither the limited-edition print nor the limited-edition photography portfolio evolved from the creative practice of picture-makers."⁴⁹⁵ Notwithstanding the early adopters just mentioned, galleries and dealers—including LIGHT Gallery,⁴⁹⁶ Lee Witkin,⁴⁹⁷ Harry Lunn,⁴⁹⁸ and others⁴⁹⁹—were important engines for this development, and the practice soon caught on. [Figure

⁴⁹³ Amy Conger, *Edward Weston*, 28.

⁴⁹⁴ Witkin and London, *The Photograph Collector's Guide*, 277; A. D. Coleman, "Limited-Edition Photography Portfolios," *Art on Paper* 9, no. 3 (2005): 44.

⁴⁹⁵ Coleman, "Limited-Edition Photography Portfolios," 44.

⁴⁹⁶ LIGHT Gallery published portfolios by, for example, Les Krims (*The Only Photographs in the World Ever to Cause a Kidnapping*, 1971, edition of twenty-five), Harry Callahan (*Landscapes, 1941–1971*, 1972, edition of twenty-five), Arnold Newman (*Ten Portraits*, 1972, edition of twenty-five), and Aaron Siskind (*Terrors and Pleasures of Levitation*, 1972, edition of fifteen), André Kertész (*Volume I* and *Volume II*, both 1973, edition of fifty each), and Benno Friedman (*White Sands*, 1976, edition of ten plus three artist's proofs).

⁴⁹⁷ Witkin published portfolios both under the auspices of Witkin Gallery and in cooperation with collector Dan Berley, as Witkin-Berley Limited. Among others, Witkin published portfolios of photographs by Jacques-Henri Lartigue (untitled, 1972, Witkin-Berley, edition of fifty plus five artist's proofs), Brassai (*A Portfolio of Ten Photographs by Brassai*, 1973, Witkin-Berley, edition of fifty), Judy Dater (*Ten Photographs*, 1973, Witkin-Berley, edition of fifty plus seven artist's proofs), Berenice Abbott (*Ten Photographs*, 1976, Witkin-Berley, edition of fifty), Francis Bruguière (untitled, 1977, Witkin Gallery, edition of fifteen plus four artist's proofs, printed posthumously by George Tice), Elliott Erwitt (*15 Photographs*, 1977, Witkin-Berley, edition of twenty-five plus five artist's proofs), and W. Eugene Smith (*Ten Photographs*, 1977, Witkin-Berley, edition of twenty-five plus five artist's proofs).

⁴⁹⁸ Lunn's company Graphics International Ltd. published or distributed portfolios by James VanDerZee (*Eighteen Photographs*, 1974, edition of seventy-five plus fifteen presentation copies, printed posthumously by Richard Benson), William Eggleston (*14 Pictures*, 1974, edition of fifteen plus one *hors commerce*), Josef Breitenbach (*Seven Portraits*, 1976, edition of twenty-five plus three artist's proofs), and Lisette Model (*Twelve Photographs*, 1977, edition of seventy-five plus fifteen artist's proofs), among others. For an in-depth discussion of Model's portfolio in particular, see Audrey Sands, "Lisette Model and the Inward Turn of Photographic Modernism" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2019).

⁴⁹⁹ For example, George Krause (*Saints and Martyrs*, 1976, Photopia Gallery, edition of thirty), Inge

68] Ambitious photographers began to publish their own portfolios as well,⁵⁰⁰ and numerous individuals and institutions, including museums, published posthumous portfolios of work by deceased photographers.⁵⁰¹ Some specialized publishers produced portfolios as well, including Ralph Gibson's Lustrum Press,⁵⁰² Burt Wolf's Double Elephant Press,⁵⁰³ and Robert Feldman's Parasol Press,⁵⁰⁴ the latter of which had long been known for producing portfolios of contemporary graphics. [Figure 69] In addition, many university photography programs, of which there were a rapidly growing number at this time, published group portfolios as a means

Morath (untitled, Neikrug Gallery, 1977, edition of fifty plus three artist's proofs), Nickolas Muray (untitled, 1978, Prakapas Gallery and the International Museum of Photography at the George Eastman House, edition of 100, printed posthumously by Michaela Murphy), Lewis Baltz (*Nevada*, 1978, Castelli Graphics, edition of twenty-five).

⁵⁰⁰ For example, Wynn Bullock (*Photographs, 1951–1973*, 1973, edition of twenty-five plus six artist's proofs), Larry Clark (*Teen Lust*, 1974, edition of five), Joel Meyerowitz (*The Cape*, 1977, edition of twenty-five plus ten artist's proofs), Roy DeCarava (untitled, 1977, edition of twenty-five.)

⁵⁰¹ In addition to those already mentioned, see Frederick Evans (*F.H. Evans, 1853–1943: Ten Photographs*, Witkin Gallery, 1971, edition of sixty), Lewis Hine (*Portfolio I*, International Museum of Photography at the George Eastman House, 1974, edition of fifty), Karl Blossfeldt (*12 Fotograien*, Galerie Wilde, 1975, edition of fifty), Mike Disfarmer (*The Heber Springs Portraits*, Peter A. Miller, 1977, edition of fifty plus five artist's proofs), Alvin Langdon Coburn (*A Limited Edition Portfolio*, Light Impressions and International Museum of Photography at the George Eastman House, 1977, edition of 200), among others. The Evans portfolio was produced both as platinum prints (ten copies) and gelatin silver prints (fifty copies). Witkin and London, *The Photograph Collector's Guide*, 283.

⁵⁰² In addition to publishing many now-iconic photo books during this period, Lustrum also published limited portfolios of some of the same work, including Larry Clark's *Tulsa* (1975, edition of ten) and Gibson's own *Days at Sea* (1975, edition of fifty). See also Gene Thornton, "Photography," *The New York Times*, October 3, 1971.

⁵⁰³ Burt Wolf worked with Lee Friedlander to publish four portfolios, each titled *Fifteen Photographs*, by Friedlander himself (1973), along with Walker Evans (1974), Garry Winogrand (1974), and Manuel Alvarez Bravo (1975), each in an edition of seventy-five plus fifteen artist's proofs. German publisher Steidl recently produced a boxed set of four books celebrating this series of portfolios. Thomas Zander, ed., *Double Elephant: Manuel Álvarez Bravo, Walker Evans, Lee Friedlander, Garry Winogrand*, (Göttingen, Cologne: Steidl ; Galerie Thomas Zander, 2015).

⁵⁰⁴ In addition to publishing Ansel Adams's last three portfolios, Parasol Press also published portfolios by August Sander (*Rheinlandschaften*, 1974; *Bilende Kunstler*, 1974, each in an edition of seventy-five plus six artist's proofs), Berenice Abbott (*Berenice Abbott's New York*, 1978, edition of sixty), and Todd Watts (untitled, 1978, edition of fifty). They published many more print portfolios, however, of non-photographic artists including Sol LeWitt, Brice Marden, Chuck Close, Agnes Martin, and many others. Parasol Press catalogue, autumn 1980, series 1, subseries 1, box 54, unnumbered folder, Ansel Adams Archive, AG 31, Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona; Witkin and London, *The Photograph Collector's Guide*, 278, 292.

of showcasing the work of both students and faculty, and generating funds for their departments.⁵⁰⁵

Even mass-market book publishers jumped on the bandwagon, turning out portfolios of both living and deceased photographers. The publisher Harry N. Abrams, Inc., which had already been producing “limited edition art prints” since the 1950s, produced a portfolio-adjacent series at the very outset of the 1970s, called “Abrams Original Editions: Photography Series,” overseen by the curator and photography historian Peter Pollack.⁵⁰⁶ [Figure 70] These were not quite full portfolios, but rather sets of three signed, limited edition prints by each of ten photographers, optionally accompanied by a “custom-made frame” for an additional cost. Jacob Deschin notes in his article on portfolios that while each photographer purportedly made the first print for their edition, “the additional prints from the negatives are made by a skillful printer under the photographer’s supervision.”⁵⁰⁷ It was this portfolio to which Aaron Siskind referred in the first “Photographs & Professionals” roundtable in *The Print Collector’s Newsletter*. From this conversation, it actually appears that Siskind himself was never present in the darkroom, but that Harold Jones, then director of LIGHT Gallery, oversaw the printing in his stead. In fact, rather than giving the publisher’s darkroom printer an original print as a reference, Jones and Siskind admit that they simply referred him to the image in one of Siskind’s books.

AS We said “Print it like the book.”

⁵⁰⁵ To name just a few, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Rochester Institute of Technology, the Rhode Island School of Design, the San Francisco State University Photography Department, and the Center for Photographic Studies in Louisville, KY all published group portfolios in the 1970s. Witkin and London, 293.

⁵⁰⁶ Letter from Peter Pollack to Aaron Siskind, signed November 4, 1971, series 1, box 8, folder 14, LIGHT Gallery Archive, AG 194, Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona.

⁵⁰⁷ Deschin, “Photographic Portfolios,” 119.

HJ And he did. Exactly like the book. What he didn't realize is that he had it so flat that it looked like the book. I had to go in and physically print it for the density and the richness I knew was in your print. I made the first prints. Literally.⁵⁰⁸

Despite the fact that Siskind himself was only indirectly involved in printing his work for the portfolio, the publication model laid out in Peter Pollack's original solicitation indicates that the photographer would have signed and numbered each print, signaling their authenticity. If this sounds familiar, Pollack's letter also reminded Siskind that this method of publishing limited edition photographs followed "the precise way that print publishers for more than a century have marketed lithographs."⁵⁰⁹ Siskind seems to have been reasonably pleased with how the prints themselves turned out, but ultimately referred to the enterprise as "phony," given both the scant dividends he received and the fact that, if he wanted, he could print the same negatives again at a different size, while still technically honoring the terms of the edition.⁵¹⁰

Around the same time, in 1970 and 1971, Doubleday & Company published a series of photography portfolios by Arthur Freed, Les Krims, Jerry Uelsmann, and Edward Weston. These extremely modest productions were ostensibly "reproduced in the highest quality gravure," but their rather murky, contrasty tones are a far cry from the carefully calibrated prints in that medium made by artists like Emerson, Stieglitz, or Strand. Originally priced at "less than \$1 per print," the portfolios' cover sheets suggest that they might be "suitable for framing, hanging, or just owning."⁵¹¹ [Figure 71] In 1976, Time-Life Books published *Mathew Brady's Great Americans*, a portfolio of gelatin silver contact prints made from Mathew Brady's glass plate

⁵⁰⁸ Bunnell et al., "Photographs & Professionals: A Discussion," 59.

⁵⁰⁹ Letter from Peter Pollack to Aaron Siskind, signed November 4, 1971, LIGHT Gallery Archive.

⁵¹⁰ Bunnell et al., "Photographs & Professionals," 59–60.

⁵¹¹ Arthur Freed, *Eight Photographs*, Projections/Photography Portfolios (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970); Leslie Krims, *Eight Photographs*, Projections/Photography Portfolios (New York: Doubleday, 1970); Jerry Uelsmann, *Eight Photographs*, Projections/Photography Portfolios (New York: Doubleday, 1970); Edward Weston, *Eight Photographs*, Doubleday/Projections (New York: Doubleday, 1971).

negatives in the Meserve Collection.⁵¹² Although not as cheap as the Doubleday portfolios, the Brady portfolio was priced at relatively modest \$150, and produced in a staggering edition of 2,500.⁵¹³ The extensive and rather florid promotional material leans heavily on now-familiar tropes, emphasizing the significance of the photographer, the archivally processed prints, and the important difference between these “individual contact prints made directly from the original negatives” and ordinary “mass-produced reproductions.”⁵¹⁴ [Figure 72]

It will be clear that a common recurrence throughout these portfolios is the posthumous printing of both recently deceased and historical photographers’ work. This is not unique to the 1970s—in the 1940s, for example, the New York-based Photo League issued posthumous portfolios of Lewis Hine’s Ellis Island photographs⁵¹⁵—but it certainly became more commonplace as the larger portfolio trend took off. I have referred in previous chapters to some of the complexities inherent in posthumous printing, and these are evident among the numerous portfolios of such prints, whose pedigree (namely the relationship of the publisher and/or printer to the original photographer), approach, and prices varied significantly. A 1977 review in *The*

⁵¹² *Mathew Brady’s Great Americans: Prints from the Original Glass Negatives in the Meserve Collection* (Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1976). What became known as the Meserve-Kunhardt Collection was begun in the late nineteenth century by Frederick Hill Meserve, and is especially known for its extensive holdings of Civil War-era photographic material, including photographs of Abraham Lincoln. Parts of the collection were ultimately acquired by the National Portrait Gallery (in 1981) and the Beinecke Library at Yale (in 2009). “Collection: Meserve-Kunhardt Collection | Archives at Yale,” accessed December 29, 2022, <https://archives.yale.edu/repositories/11/resources/5714>.

⁵¹³ The following year, Time-Life produced a limited edition portfolio of ten photographs by Jacques-Henri Lartigue, ostensibly made under the photographer’s supervision but produced in an edition of 7,500 and priced at \$500. *The Jacques-Henri Lartigue Portfolio* promotional material, series 1, sub-series 1, box 63, folder 10, Witkin Gallery Collection, AG 62, Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona; Witkin and London, *The Photograph Collector’s Guide*, 287.

⁵¹⁴ *Mathew Brady’s Great Americans* promotional material, series 1, sub-series 1, box 63, folder 10, Witkin Gallery Collection, AG 62, Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona.

⁵¹⁵ These two portfolios, published by the Photo League in 1942, were untitled and contained four prints each, in an edition of thirty. Witkin and London, *Photograph Collector’s Guide*, 286.

Print Collector's Newsletter of the posthumous Mike Disfarmer portfolio⁵¹⁶ lays out some of these issues succinctly:

The portfolio is symptomatic of the advantages and disadvantages of the posthumous printing of photographs. Peter Miller discovered Disfarmer, a commercial photographer whose exacting portraits of the people of a remote Arkansas village in the 1940s were never known, much less forgotten. All should be grateful to Mr. Miller for making Disfarmer accessible. But to what degree are Miller's harsh portfolio prints Disfarmers? Few can say, for almost no one has seen an original Disfarmer. Not even his recent exhibition at the International Center of Photography contained vintage prints. And is accessibility really an argument for a portfolio? [...] But if accessibility is really the object, far better a book.⁵¹⁷

Some portfolios were indeed intended simply as reference tools, a way to circulate relatively scarce historical images, and in this case the question of why a book might not be more efficacious is an apt one. Berkey K+L Gallery in New York, for example, produced two “copy print portfolios” containing “highest-quality, black-and-white copy prints, custom-made by hand—not machine.”⁵¹⁸ One portfolio included work by “masters” such as Julia Margaret Cameron and Alfred Stieglitz, while the other showcased images by FSA photographers such as Dorothea Lange and Ben Shahn. In the promotional material, these portfolios are clearly distinguished from the other portfolios produced or distributed by the gallery, and are priced accordingly. The gallery distributed the Witkin-Berley portfolio of Roman Vishniac’s work, for example, and lists the price at \$3,500 or \$4,000,⁵¹⁹ whereas the copy print portfolios are

⁵¹⁶ Mike Disfarmer, *The Heber Springs Portraits*, 1977, Peter A. Miller, edition of fifty plus five artist’s proofs.

⁵¹⁷ “Prints & Photographs Published: Mike Disfarmer,” *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 8, no. 2 (May–June 1977): 42.

⁵¹⁸ Berkey K+L Gallery of Photographic Art catalogue and order form, n.d., series 1, sub-series 1, box 63, folder 10, Witkin Gallery Collection, AG 62, Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona.

⁵¹⁹ Roman Vishniac (*The Vanished World*, Witkin-Berley Ltd., 1977, edition of fifty plus five artist’s proofs). The total edition for the portfolio, which contained twelve prints, was fifty copies, but it was produced in two different sizes. The first twenty-five sets comprised 14x11” prints and the last twenty-five were printed at 20x16”. The larger size was predictably more expensive. Witkin and London, *The Photograph Collector's Guide*, 297.

available for \$25 each, or “\$3 per individual print.” This stands in contrast to the Disfarmer portfolio which, despite the fact that it was printed by an individual with no particular sensitivity to (or indeed knowledge of) the original photographer’s work, was still apparently marketed as an art collectible and priced at \$500.⁵²⁰ The same can be said of Time-Life’s Mathew Brady portfolio described earlier, although in other instances particular care *was* taken regarding the original process and appearance of historical work.⁵²¹ The portfolio craze even extended to posthumous prints of historical artists not commonly known for their photographs, as in the 1977 portfolio of photographs by American painter Reginald Marsh,⁵²² or the Graphics International Ltd. portfolio of photographs by Czech painter and illustrator Alphonse Marie Mucha, selected by Graham Ovenden, and printed by Howard Grey and Richard Benson.⁵²³ In each of these instances, there is an uneasy tension between the assertion of originality (often the emphasis that the posthumous prints were made from the photographer’s original negatives) and the flouting of many of the values already attached to vintage prints, in particular the specificity of historical photographic materials and the primacy of the photographer’s unique craft and vision. It is

⁵²⁰ Witkin and London, 283.

⁵²¹ One example is the 1977 Eadweard Muybridge *Yosemite Photographs, 1872* portfolio published by the Chicago Albumen Works (CAW). The gold-toned albumen prints were made by Doug Munson and Charles Reynolds from copies of Muybridge’s original mammoth plate glass negatives, and were accompanied by “A Personal, Historical and Technical Note on Albumen Printing” by photograph historian Joel Snyder. The portfolio was produced in an edition of 300 plus 4 *hors commerce*, and priced at \$1,250. Witkin and London, 290. CAW, which remains active at the time of this writing, was founded in 1976 “with the express intent of producing and selling modern, authentic albumen prints made by printing original glass plate negatives obtained from archives and historical societies,” and the Muybridge portfolio was their inaugural project. “Chicago Albumen Works,” accessed January 8, 2023, <https://www.albumenworks.com/about/history.html>.

⁵²² *Photographs of New York* (Middendorf Gallery and Jem Hom, with the estate of the photographer, 1977, edition of twenty-five plus four artist’s proofs), priced at \$6,500. Despite the fact that Marsh died in 1954, the promotional material for the portfolio makes the curious assertion that the prints are “signed, Reginald Marsh, with the estate stamp.” *Photographs of New York* promotional brochure, n.d., series 1, sub-series 1, box 63, folder 8, Witkin Gallery Collection, AG 62, Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona.

⁵²³ *Settings and Models: A Suit of Ten Photographs* (Academy Editions and Graphics International Ltd., 1975, edition of seventy-five plus twenty-five *hors commerce*), priced at \$2,000.

difficult not to see many of these publications as little more than cash-grabs, especially in the case of expensive examples that seem to be capitalizing on the artist's fame, rather than the particular merits of the photographs themselves.

Portfolios as a format conferred a sense of both rarity and prestige to photography, and emphasized the “objectness” and collectability of the photograph, even (or especially) in the case of otherwise mediocre posthumous prints. Whereas individual photographs may have been more easily dismissed as ephemera by the neophyte observer, portfolios were often substantial, deluxe objects. Portfolios combine the sustained interest of photographic books with the preciousness of fine prints, and often demand a more attentive form of interaction as the viewer is forced to move one by one through the individual prints. As objects, the most opulent among them straddle the line between photography, printmaking, and *livre d'artiste*,⁵²⁴ as publishers enlisted the services of fine printers, designers, and bookbinders, in addition to the photographers themselves. [Figure 73, Figure 74, Figure 75]

At the same time, portfolios were sometimes touted—or referred to pejoratively—as “mini-retrospectives” or “mini-exhibitions,” an especially apt characterization given that many portfolios during this period were basically composed of “greatest hits,”⁵²⁵ showcasing the best-known (and most saleable) highlights of a photographer's career.⁵²⁶ This is certainly one reason that portfolios have rarely garnered a great deal of serious scholarly attention, being seen

⁵²⁴ Elza Adamowicz, “The Livre d'artiste in Twentieth-Century France,” *French Studies* 63, no. 2 (April 1, 2009): 189–98. As defined by Adamowicz, the *livres d'artistes* of the early twentieth century were innovative collaborations between poets and artists, usually containing original prints, produced with fine materials, *en feuilles* (unbound), boxed, and in limited editions.

⁵²⁵ For example, Roman Vishniac's *The Vanished World* portfolio of his well-known 1930s photographs of Eastern European Jewish ghettos, cited earlier.

⁵²⁶ Witkin and London, *The Photograph Collector's Guide*, 277; Roberta Faul, “For the Collector of Photographs,” *Museum News* 54, no. 3 (February 1976): 22.

primarily, and often rightly, as strictly commercial products.⁵²⁷ At the same time, it is worth observing that throughout the history of the format, some portfolios stand out as coherent artistic statements in their own right. In these instances, far from being predictable retrospective surveys, the portfolio can be an appropriate vehicle for a sustained project in which the format works in tandem with the contents of the photographs. One such example has already been noted: Paul Strand's 1940 *Photographs of Mexico*, republished in 1967 as *The Mexican Portfolio*. In this case, the portfolio format showcases the unity of the subject matter, the production of the photographs in hand-varnished photogravure, and the careful sizing and sequencing of the prints, to create a deliberately cinematic experience. [Figure 76, Figure 77] George Tice also produced portfolios from the late 1960s through the 1970s which were dedicated to discrete bodies of work and which amply demonstrate the photographer's virtuoso darkroom skills.⁵²⁸ Other artists, perhaps somewhat more skeptical of the fine art portfolio, made examples that skewed more toward the irreverent multiples of the 1960s. Each copy of Robert Heinecken's 1971 *Just Good Eats For U Diner* portfolio, for example, contains a different set of eight offset lithographs of "documentary photograms" of food, housed in a clear vinyl sleeve along with a printed colophon designed to resemble a diner menu, and a reproduction of a 1960s cowboy kitsch painting.⁵²⁹ [Figure 78, Figure 79] Around the same time, Les Krims published his trilogy of portfolios, also printed in commercial offset lithography: *The Deerslayers*, *The Little People of America 1971*, and *The Incredible Case of the Stack O'Wheats Murders*. [Figure 80, Figure 81, Figure 82]

⁵²⁷ For more information, see Kalkstein, "Inside the Box," 5–10.

⁵²⁸ In addition to his 1968 *Amish Portfolio* and 1969 *Trees* portfolio, already mentioned, Tice also self-published *Bodie* (1971) and *Peekamoose* (1973). By contrast, he also published his *Portfolio V* in 1976, which contained a selection of images from 1967–1976, and is an unusual example of a portfolio including prints in a range of mediums, namely gelatin silver, platinum, and palladium. Witkin and London, *The Photograph Collector's Guide*, 296.

⁵²⁹ Witkin Gallery, *Catalogue I*, 44. The description in the Witkin catalogue claims that every print in every portfolio is unique, but it is unclear whether this is precisely true.

These portfolios, in addition to their provocative subject matter, were unusually diminutive (just over five inches square), and printed in an edition of 4000 each.⁵³⁰ Speaking broadly, A. D. Coleman writes that such a portfolio “summarizes and distills a resolved project; it explores a theme; it represents a completed thought,” and accordingly comprises “an authentic component of [an] artist’s *oeuvre*.”⁵³¹

At the same time, even among the basically retrospective portfolios of the 1970s, there were subtly different approaches. Harold Jones, commenting in 1973, said that although many publishers followed the greatest hits model, some of the LIGHT Gallery portfolios instead consisted of images that form “a little suite,” in the case of Aaron Siskind; “pictures that had not been shown much,” for Harry Callahan; or “prints that were very influential,” for André Kertész. Jones noted that for LIGHT’s Arnold Newman portfolio, meanwhile, he picked “the very well-known prints because I wanted to make really certain the portfolios would sell.”⁵³²

Indeed the greatest hits approach was often emphasized as a selling point to new entrants into the photography market, as it removed a certain amount of guesswork from the equation. Victor Schrager, director of LIGHT Gallery from 1975 to 1978, suggested in 1976 that “portfolios are important for anyone who does not have the resources, the time to really look at the tremendous body of work an artist has produced.”⁵³³ For those just starting to collect, in other words, portfolios came with a kind of built-in seal of approval, having been pre-selected by knowledgeable experts, often including the photographers themselves. On the other hand, Richard Blodgett suggested that portfolios were more likely to appeal to institutional collectors,

⁵³⁰ *The Deerslayers*, *The Little People of America 1971*, and *The Incredible Case of the Stack O’Wheats Murders* were all self-published by the artist.

⁵³¹ A. D. Coleman, “Limited-Edition Photography Portfolios,” *Art on Paper* 9, no. 3 (2005): 45.

⁵³² Deschin, “Photographic Portfolios,” 118.

⁵³³ Faul, “For the Collector of Photographs,” 30.

specifically corporations and “smaller museums” for whom a ready-made exhibition in a box might be especially convenient. In his estimation, individual collectors were less likely to shell out the hefty price of a full set of a prints.⁵³⁴ This seems to have been borne out at least in the early years of LIGHT Gallery’s operations, based on a 1972 internal report which notes that “we have discovered that the portfolios are purchased by institutions almost exclusively,” and cites a need for better publicity and an expanded clientele.⁵³⁵ The gallery’s continued portfolio output, however, suggests that the situation may have been a temporary setback, and in fact a 1974 memo announced that portfolio prices would be going up.⁵³⁶ Again, it seems that portfolios were largely expected to appeal to new collectors and investors, rather than to the experts and connoisseurs who would certainly prefer to make their own selection of prints rather than to have someone else do it for them. The same material uniformity that characterizes limited editions in general also applies here, as the numerous copies of most portfolios would be expected to be essentially identical. Of course, some idiosyncratic photographers chafed against such imposed homogeneity. Duane Michals purportedly began a portfolio in which

Each one will be put together with a different selection of photographs and the text will vary as my observations change. No two will be alike. These are not portfolios in any sense. Portfolios always seem to me like loaves of bread. I’ve always been troubled by all those similar, impersonal, perfect prints. I longed for the artist’s thumbprint.⁵³⁷

These seem to have been rare exceptions, however, as most portfolios of the era are consistent in their very uniformity.

⁵³⁴ Blodgett, *Photographs: A Collector’s Guide*, 122.

⁵³⁵ “DRAFT: LIGHT Gallery – The First Year and Beyond,” December 13, 1972, series 3, box 34, folder 16, LIGHT Gallery Archive, AG 194, Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona.

⁵³⁶ Untitled, undated typescript, 1974, series 3, box 34, folder 9, LIGHT Gallery Archive, AG 194, Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona.

⁵³⁷ Duane Michals (untitled, self-published, 1972–, edition of twenty-five). Witkin and London, *The Photograph Collector’s Guide*, 288–289. As of 1978, only ten copies had apparently been made. I have not been able to verify whether Michals ever completed the edition.

Investing in Limited Editions

Limited edition portfolios were also interesting to dealers and collectors for financial reasons. Portfolios were frequently promoted as “good deals” on the presumption that the price of an entire portfolio would be much lower than the cost of the same number of prints purchased individually. “This saving,” writes Witkin, “plus the attractiveness of a ‘package,’ makes portfolios appealing to many collectors. Once purchased, portfolios can be split up for display, for single-print sales, or for the sake of joint owners.”⁵³⁸ According to Blodgett, however, these “joint owners” were often dealers themselves, who were more likely than private owners to be able to turn around and re-sell the individual prints. The Witkin Gallery’s own catalogue bears this out, including five individual Ansel Adams prints specifically designated as “from Portfolio V.”⁵³⁹ [Figure 83] Blodgett also suggests that the ostensible advantage of the limited edition portfolio “can at times prove illusory.”

The Ansel Adams Portfolio VII, published in 1976, is an example. That portfolio, containing thirteen images (including one unique Polaroid per portfolio), was offered initially at a retail price of \$10,000. Meanwhile, the individual pictures from a disassembled portfolio were being quoted by one dealer at a combined retail price of \$13,500, indicating that the \$10,000 portfolio price was a bargain. However, when a copy of the portfolio was sold at auction in London in March 1977 it brought only \$6,000—showing that even the \$10,000 price was higher than a collector need have paid.⁵⁴⁰

This is, of course, just one example, and the return on investment will have certainly fluctuated with the market over the years. But, as with all limited editions, it remains clear that the

⁵³⁸ Witkin and London, 277.

⁵³⁹ Witkin Gallery, *Catalogue I*, 17. At this time, 1973, Adams was still filling print orders, and thus the Witkin catalogue also offers “any image available except those in Portfolio V.” We will remember that the negatives for this portfolio had been canceled at Bill Turnage’s suggestion and could no longer be printed.

⁵⁴⁰ Blodgett, *Photographs: A Collector’s Guide*, 122.

assumption of their rarity, and consequently their relative safety as investments, has been far from assured. One encounters a range of opinions, even from the dealers and photographers themselves, on whether portfolios were especially profitable. Blodgett points to the popularity of portfolios as “big-ticket items that sell for high prices” and the fact that they “create a rich source of new supply for photographers whose work is in demand but scarce.”⁵⁴¹ Landt and Lisl Dennis write that “one of the reasons that portfolios are popular with photographers today is that they make money—often big money.”⁵⁴² A. D. Coleman, with the benefit of two decades of hindsight, suggests more evenly that portfolios, “especially if by major names, sold reasonably well, sometimes like hotcakes.”⁵⁴³ But even at the time it was evident that if the rewards of publishing portfolios were potentially high, so were the risks. “For the publisher,” concedes Roberta Faul, “the costs are enormous, \$20,000 to \$30,000 or more per portfolio. While a few publishers split production and publicity costs with the artist, most do not.”⁵⁴⁴ That is, most publishers paid photographers a flat fee to print a portfolio, while both putting up the entirety of the production costs and, ideally, pocketing the remainder of the profit themselves. Faul goes on to quote Lee Witkin, who says that “every step of the way is costly. [...] There’s no money to be made in publishing portfolios.” She also cites Burt Wolf of Double Elephant Press, who claims, “I’m not making my living from this.”⁵⁴⁵ Taking the long view of the market, it appears that portfolios, despite their exuberant heyday in the 1970s, have become less popular in the decades since, although not entirely obsolete. Most dealers, collectors, and curators evince far more

⁵⁴¹ Blodgett, 121.

⁵⁴² Dennis and Dennis, *Collecting Photographs*, 110.

⁵⁴³ Coleman, “Limited-Edition Photography Portfolios,” 45.

⁵⁴⁴ Faul, “For the Collector of Photographs,” 22.

⁵⁴⁵ Faul, 22.

interest in—and pay far more money for—vintage prints, while “portfolio prints” are often felt to smack of commercialism and uniformity.

Indeed, the late 1970s saw particular interest in limited editions and portfolios—of both graphics and photographs—as part of a larger trend toward investing in art. The tax reform bill passed under President Gerald Ford in October of 1976 discouraged previously attractive tax shelters such as oil wells, movies, and agriculture, and it wasn’t long before attention turned to the art world. Rising inflation in the late 1970s also precipitated a financial interest in art and other collectibles. And as Tennyson Schad put it in 1981, “photography is now mentioned as such an alternative investment, along with gold and silver, art, antiques, classic cars, and stamps. Even pension funds are jumping on the collectibles bandwagon.”⁵⁴⁶ In addition to the relatively straightforward practice of collecting photographs with an eye to long-term capital gain, a number of more dubious, if still essentially legal, practices took hold at this time. Neither were novel strategies in and of themselves; what was new was the attention paid to photography specifically. The first and perhaps most notorious were the tax shelter deals. In these cases, a “promoter” would pay an artist for an original print matrix—that is, a plate or a negative—as well as the rights to reproduce the image. Both the matrix and the rights were then sold to an investor, the value having been determined by an outside appraiser. By subsequently producing and selling not only limited-edition original prints or photographs, but potentially even mass-market products such as posters, the investor hoped both to profit from these sales and to obtain tax write-offs for years into the future, in excess of the initial purchase price.⁵⁴⁷ Although most

⁵⁴⁶ Schad, “Shooting from the Hip,” 220.

⁵⁴⁷ For more detailed explanations of these schemes, see Grace Glueck, “The Art World Turns to Original Prints as Tax Shelters,” *The New York Times*, February 5, 1978; “Tax Shelters— Print Write-Off or Wipe-Out?,” *The Print Collector’s Newsletter* 9, no. 1 (March–April 1978): 16–17; Herbert Lust, “Art Tax Shelter and Investment,” *Barron’s*, August 20, 1979; H.J. Maidenber, “Tax Shelters in Original Art,” *The New York Times*, October 28, 1979.

of the press coverage of these widely discussed schemes tended to focus on limited edition graphics, the newly lucrative photography market was pulled into the fray as well. Many observers were skeptical of these schemes' ultimate viability as money-making ventures, and uncomfortable with their unsavory aesthetic and ethical connotations. *The Print Collector's Newsletter* noted that the Art Dealers Association had "denounced plate deals" altogether, and would not participate in appraising such plates or prints.⁵⁴⁸ Tennyson Schad remarked that "the typical tax deal I have seen has had no socially, or artistically, redeeming value. The only art they advance is the art of tax avoidance."⁵⁴⁹

Artists themselves seem have been divided, depending in part on where they found themselves financially and how (or by whom) they were approached. In 1978, Aaron Siskind recalled that two of his relatives had recently proposed a tax shelter scheme:

As a matter of fact I did have a previous proposition from a remote cousin of mine who came to visit with a less remote cousin and the remote cousin was a lawyer operating in tax shelters and he sat down with me at my dining-room table and he says "We'll take your negative. That's all we want is your negative." And I said "Which negative?" "Any negative, doesn't matter." You know, it's just unbelievable. I could give him a junk negative that I didn't want and make some money. Well, that was easy to turn down.⁵⁵⁰

Siskind *did* agree to participate in a second kind of tax arrangement, one with somewhat more acceptance and longevity in the art world. This was the standard tax donation proposition, in which an individual purchases a group of art works at less than the current retail value, holds on to it for a period of time, and then donates it to a museum for an attractive tax write-off. In these instances, it can be argued that all three parties—the purchaser, the artist, and the cash-strapped museum—profit significantly. Of course, the details of such arrangements vary. Both Siskind

⁵⁴⁸ "Tax Shelters—Print Write-Off or Wipe-Out?," 17.

⁵⁴⁹ Schad, "Shooting from the Hip," 221.

⁵⁵⁰ Bunnell et al., "Photographs & Professionals: Same Time, Five Years," 84.

and Harry Callahan sold several large caches of photographs through LIGHT Gallery to a group of three collectors at a relatively low price.⁵⁵¹ Their agreement stipulated that the purchasers would hold on to the prints for several years, eventually donate a portion to various institutions for a tax write-off, and sell the remainder over a period of time, again working through LIGHT, which would take a commission.⁵⁵² For Siskind, both the unprecedented personal windfall that this represented and his trust in these particular investors made the deal worthwhile and morally palatable.⁵⁵³ On the other hand, Siskind was also approached with still another proposal in which he would print the equivalent of a hundred portfolios of ten prints each, be paid approximately 25% of their ostensible worth, and the buyers would later donate the portfolios. In this case, he felt that “the people who are going to give me the money are really not interested in the work at all,” and he turned it down.⁵⁵⁴ Other photographers may certainly have been less judicious. In all of these cases, we can see the entanglement between reproducibility and the engines of the marketplace. In the absence of a natural or automatic cap on the number of available photographs, dealers, collectors, and photographers—with varying degrees of scrupulousness—were often tempted both to create rarity and to test its boundaries for the sake of profit.

What Does “Limited Edition” Really Mean?

⁵⁵¹ Ultimately, the LIGHT “syndicate” purchased 2,000 prints each from Siskind and Callahan, paying them each \$50,000 per 1,000 prints. Series III, box 36, folder 6, LIGHT Gallery Archive, AG 194, Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona.

⁵⁵² Letter from Tennyson Schad to Aaron Siskind, May 15, 1975, series I, box 8, folder 14, LIGHT Gallery Archive, AG 194, Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona. The same folder also contains several drafts of the final contract between LIGHT and Siskind, along with additional correspondence and memos.

⁵⁵³ For Siskind’s own explanation of this deal and his feelings about it, see Bunnell et al., “Photographs & Professionals: Same Time, Five Years,” 83.

⁵⁵⁴ Bunnell et al., 84.

The very idea of limiting the number of prints made from a photographic negative was not universally embraced and has remained a point of some contention. Since negatives do not, generally speaking, wear out by themselves, it remains the prerogative of the photographer—or perhaps their representatives or heirs—to determine how or if to definitively cap an edition. Further, there remains the question of what exactly constitutes an edition in the first place. Differences of opinion on this matter in particular have led to heated debate and even legal confrontation in the years since the photo boom.

In the case of traditional graphics, common practice, at least since the late nineteenth century, has been to cancel or destroy the print matrix after an edition is completed, even given the fact that such matrices are often felt to naturally diminish in quality anyway. This approach has rarely been embraced in the photography community, but there are exceptions. One that we have already seen is Ansel Adams's decision to run two groups of his negatives through a check-cancelling machine—a decision that he never repeated, and even opposed on principle. Another dramatic, if also quite singular, example is Brett Weston's rather showman-like performance of publicly burning seventy-five of his own negatives in front of nearly a hundred onlookers, and subsequently destroying all but a dozen of the remainder.⁵⁵⁵ For the most part, however, photographers have not usually chosen to be quite so definitive or dramatic. The establishment of the Center for Creative Photography in 1975 gave artists a chance to more graciously (and profitably) retire their negatives, while ostensibly leaving open the possibility for future scholars

⁵⁵⁵ “News of the Print World: People & Places,” *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 5, no. 1 (March–April 1974): 10–12; Brett Weston, *Brett Weston, Photographs from Five Decades* (Millerton, NY: Aperture, Inc.; Distributed in U.S. by Harper & Row, 1980), 59; Charles Hagen, “Just How Sacred Should Photo Negatives Be?,” *New York Times*, March 3, 1992; Suzanne Muchnic, “A Bonfire of the Vanities?: Admirers of Brett Weston Question Why He Destroyed a Lifetime's Worth of Negatives,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 19, 1991. Weston's destruction of his negatives was carried out in late 1991, apparently the culmination of a “decade-old pledge,” alluded to in his 1980 monograph.

to learn from and even reprint them. For the most part, the notion of students having the opportunity to work directly with artists' negatives has rarely come to fruition. But institutions such as the Center have in rare cases indeed created new prints from archival negatives for the sake of exhibition, although not for sale—a decision that has not gone uncriticized. One notable instance is the 2013 Garry Winogrand exhibition, organized by curators at SFMOMA and the National Gallery of Art, for which the Center printed not simply Winogrand's negatives, but in fact negatives that he had made but never processed or seen.⁵⁵⁶ These exceptions aside, depositing negatives in archival institutions has been one way in which some photographers have chosen to eventually limit the production of their work. Of course, this avenue is presumably available only to those artists prominent enough to attract serious institutional attention, and is also for the most part a step taken toward the end of a photographer's life rather than preemptively. It also stands in contrast to the flurry of posthumous editions that appeared in the 1970s as the market was taking off, and even to more recent instances such as the discovery of street photographer Vivian Maier. In this case, Maier was an amateur photographer and nanny whose work was entirely unknown until a trove of her negatives was discovered by chance after her death. Much like the example of Mike Disfarmer, mentioned earlier, the excitement about and capitalization on Maier's photographs has been entirely predicated on the posthumous curation and printing of her negatives by individuals with no direct connection to the artist or her work.⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵⁶ Leo Rubinfien, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and National Gallery of Art, *Garry Winogrand* (San Francisco: Museum of Modern Art in association with Yale University Press, 2013).

⁵⁵⁷ The flurry of interest in Maier and her work since her negatives were first discovered in 2007 is too extensive to comprehensively document here. See for example Geoff Dyer, *Vivian Maier: Street Photographer*, ed. John Maloof (Brooklyn: PowerHouse Books, 2011); Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, *Vivian Maier: Out of the Shadows* (Chicago, Illinois: A Cityfiles Press Book, 2012); Pamela Bannos, *Vivian Maier: A Photographer's Life and Afterlife* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017); Anne Morin, Ann Marks, and Christa Blümlinger, *Vivian Maier*, trans. Ruth Taylor (London:

Just as ambiguous and slippery has been the fundamental question of what exactly comprises an edition. Taken at face value, in its simplest terms, a limited edition of photographs is a pre-defined check on the number of prints made from a given negative. But as we have seen, photographers have not always been entirely comfortable with placing such restrictions on their production, particularly as the market has continued to flourish, and demand—especially for well-known images—has remained high. In this case, when an edition has been filled but demand remains, it is the photographer who loses out as others continue to sell and re-sell existing copies of the work.⁵⁵⁸ As a result, some photographers over the years have taken advantage of ostensible loopholes in the concept of limited editions, with mixed results. The most common such loophole is considering an edition to refer only to one specific print format or vehicle. An entire portfolio may be issued in an edition, for example, while the photographer reserves the right to continue printing the individual images. In other cases, the edition applies only to a specific print size or medium. In some cases, but not all, photographers have been rigorously transparent about announcing such editions in advance. Although some observers believe that this loophole ultimately deflates the market for a photographer’s work, for the most part it is tacitly accepted, if not necessarily condoned.⁵⁵⁹

Occasionally, though, the repercussions have been dramatic. In 2003, the collector Michael Mattis praised William Eggleston for not creating new editions of his work. Speaking of Eggleston’s iconic “Memphis (Tricycle)” (c. 1969), Mattis noted “One would imagine he would have had a lot of financial temptation to do, say, type-C prints of that (the original was dye

Thames & Hudson, 2022).

⁵⁵⁸ Walker, “Make Yourself Scarce?,” 27.

⁵⁵⁹ Walker, 28.

transfer). He seems to have resisted. And good for his market.”⁵⁶⁰ Ironically, Eggleston did just that, less than ten years later, releasing a new limited edition of thirty-six of his images. These were produced in a very small edition of two prints each, and were printed in a much larger format than the original photographs.⁵⁶¹ Rather than dye transfer, the new prints were made with digital inkjet—a technology not available when Eggleston made the first edition. The new prints were made as part of a consignment agreement with Christie’s to raise money for the Eggleston Artistic Trust, and thirty-six prints were auctioned on March 12, 2012. The sale was successful, but the new edition drew the ire of Jonathan Sobel, one of Eggleston’s long-time collectors.⁵⁶² Believing that the re-issue of these images “diluted the market” for the purportedly limited edition dye transfer prints he already owned, Sobel sued Eggleston for damages.⁵⁶³ Sobel’s claim was that Eggleston had explicitly released the earlier prints as limited editions; thus the new editions were a violation of the terms of sale, as well as a breach of the New York Arts and Cultural Affairs Law (ACAL), which specifically seeks to protect purchasers of art works issued as multiples.⁵⁶⁴ “What’s the purpose of a limited edition,” Sobel asked at the time, “if you can make an infinite quantity?”⁵⁶⁵ Nonetheless, a US District judge dismissed Sobel’s complaint “on the grounds that the ACAL’s express warranty provision only compels the disclosure of

⁵⁶⁰ Walker, 28.

⁵⁶¹ The original dye transfers were printed 20x16”, whereas the new digital prints were 60x44”.

⁵⁶² “Photographic Masterworks by William Eggleston,” accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.christies.com/about-us/press-archive/details?PressReleaseID=5355&lid=1&mob-is-app=false>. The sale ultimately garnered \$5.9 million.

⁵⁶³ David Walker, “Limited Edition,” 20.

⁵⁶⁴ “Arts and Cultural Affairs,” NY State Senate, February 15, 2020, <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/ACA>.

⁵⁶⁵ “Q&A: Art Collector Jonathan Sobel Explains His Beef with William Eggleston,” *PDN Online*, April 6, 2012, <https://pdnonline.com/news/qa-art-collector-jonathan-sobel-explains-his-beef-with-william-eggleston/>.

previously created reprints—which would consequently dilute a series of limited edition works—but ‘does not create a warranty barring *future* production of multiples.’”⁵⁶⁶

The legal outcome of the case notwithstanding, opinion within the photography community was mixed. Some dealers, such as Alex Novak, insisted that Eggleston had behaved unethically: “When you tell the market, ‘I’m going to limit,’ then you lie by doing other editions, you should be punished for it.”⁵⁶⁷ At the same time, Novak also questioned the premise that Eggleston’s new editions would automatically harm the value of Sobel’s vintage prints, especially in light of the renewed publicity generated by the Christie’s sale. Other gallerists, including Howard Greenberg and Yancey Richardson, defended Eggleston’s right to reprint his images, particularly given the fact that the digital process he used had not been previously available.⁵⁶⁸ While the dye transfer process that Eggleston used for the original edition is known to be relatively stable, some other color processes, most notably chromogenic prints, are notoriously fugitive. Why should a photographer then not be allowed to take advantage of new opportunities to produce more stable—or larger, or more beautiful—prints?

Even within the explicitly commercial world of limited editions, we thus return here to the question of photographic materiality in determining value and collectability. Interestingly, one legal commentator on the Sobel case described Eggleston’s digital edition as “reprints that were identical to the eight limited edition photographs in Sobel’s collection but created using digital scans and an inkjet printer, and were significantly larger at 44” by 60” inches.”⁵⁶⁹ In other

⁵⁶⁶ Joshua S. Wolkoff and Nancy E. Wolff, “Photographer William Eggleston Beats Claim By Collector For Creating New Prints Outside Of Edition,” Cowan, DeBaets, Abrahams & Sheppard LLP, April 12, 2013, <https://cdas.com/photographer-william-eggleston-beats-claim-by-collector-for-creating-new-prints-outside-of-edition-2/>.

⁵⁶⁷ Walker, “Limited Edition,” 23.

⁵⁶⁸ Walker, 23.

⁵⁶⁹ Wolkoff and Wolff, “Photographer William Eggleston Beats Claim.”

words, the writers continue to refer to prints as “identical” because they are made from the same negative, despite the obvious and significant disparities in size, material, and provenance. By contrast, in the introduction to the 2012 Eggleston sale, Christie’s makes a different case: “In their new size, the photographs become entirely different objects than any that have ever existed on the market until this point.”⁵⁷⁰ Limited editions thus occupy an uneasy point of intersection between the modernist values that engendered the early photography market, the growing commercialization that took hold toward the end of the 1970s, and the long-standing cultural insistence that photography is an inherently reproducible medium whose strength is simply to copy images. Limited edition photographs are intended to create a sense of rarity for the medium, to counteract the very idea of infinite duplicates. At the same time, they stepped in where vintage prints left off, to ensure a new supply of commodities for a growing public, and in so doing created far more photographs—specifically, photographs intended for sale as fine art—than had ever existed before. Limited editions have, in some ways, thus unwittingly returned photography to its function of identical reproducibility by creating new groups of prints that all look essentially the same. And yet photographers’ circumvention of the purported social (or commercial) contract represented by editions has injected a controversial element of uncertainty into the stratagem, while also insisting once again that prints made with different materials or in different sizes or at different times are in fact distinct objects with their own characteristics and values, even when made from the same negative.

⁵⁷⁰ “Photographic Masterworks by William Eggleston.”

CONCLUSION

On April 20, 1979, the board of directors of a new organization, the Association of International Photography Art Dealers (AIPAD), sent out a letter announcing its first members meeting, to be held on May 6 at the Daniel Wolf Gallery in New York.⁵⁷¹ [Figure 84] The association had been officially formed four months earlier, on January 8, with Wolf as its first president and Marvin Heiferman, then still directing the photography program at Castelli Graphics, as vice president.⁵⁷² Spurred by their unsatisfactory experience selling photographs at the 1978 “Photographic Collecting, Past and Present, in the United States, Canada, and Europe” symposium at the George Eastman House in Rochester, several photography dealers had decided to take matters into their own hands. An early announcement in the *ARTnewsletter* cites a statement from Wolf, noting,

The dealers felt that an association along the lines of the Art Dealers Association of America but devoted specifically to photography was needed for the purposes of communicating, educating, and enhancing public confidence in the photography market. The association will make policy statements on photography standards and ethics, publicize known stolen or faked material and address the issues of reproductions and posthumous editions. Wolf said that the association also hopes to raise funds to publish a comprehensive description of photographic techniques and processes in order to dispel some of the confusion in this area.⁵⁷³

At the time of the announcement, some thirty galleries and dealers had already signed on as members. The organization’s first Annual Fine Art Photography Exposition, held from October 17–19, 1980, included thirty-nine exhibitors.⁵⁷⁴ By 1984, AIPAD had forty members, and in

⁵⁷¹ Letter from Daniel Wolf on behalf of AIPAD, April 20, 1979, series III, box 102, folder 10, Harry Lunn Papers, 004.M.17, Research Institute, Los Angeles, California.

⁵⁷² Form letter from Daniel Wolf sent to Stephen White, n.d., series IV, box 42, folder 1, Stephen White Gallery of Photography records, 2002.M.43, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California.

⁵⁷³ Undated clipping from the *ARTnewsletter*, c. 1979, box 42, folder 1, Stephen White Gallery of Photography records.

⁵⁷⁴ *Celebration: 30th Anniversary: The AIPAD Photography Show 1980–2010* (Washington, DC: The Association of International Photography Art Dealers, 2010), 3. See also Ann Barry, “Photography

1989 there were seventy-one. The numbers since then have fluctuated, but by the 2000s the number of official members remained relatively stable at well over 100, and the 2009 Photography Show (as the Exposition is now called) included seventy-five exhibitors.⁵⁷⁵

In 1983, AIPAD published *On Collecting Photographs*, a pamphlet that reiterates many of the concepts, definitions, and reassurances that were by this time commonplace among photography dealers and consumers—although perhaps not so commonplace that they didn't still bear repeating for newcomers to the field.⁵⁷⁶ The pamphlet succinctly covers such questions as *What is the investment potential of photograph collecting?*, *How can one predict which photographers will be successful?*, *What determines the value of a photograph?*, and *Is it better to buy a vintage print or a modern one?*, *Is a photograph permanent or will it fade?*, as well as *How does one choose a dealer?*. I have chosen as the end-point of my dissertation the founding of AIPAD because it represents the culmination and crystallization of the heady, experimental, and fractious period of the photo boom. This small pamphlet from 1983 still aims to address many of the same questions that began circulating over a decade earlier, but at this point the answers feel codified. For example, pertaining to the value of a photograph, the pamphlet asserts:

In the marketplace, value is usually determined by factors such as rarity, subject matter, print quality, print condition, medium, size, provenance, the artist's reputation, and the importance of the image. Aesthetic judgements about the photograph's composition, tonal quality and range, or color (if it is a color print), are also important. Ultimately, the value of a print is based on the prices that have been realized by the particular work or others like it over a period of time.⁵⁷⁷

The existence of AIPAD itself also indicates a kind of critical mass, a substantial and stable network of investors—literally and figuratively—in the field of photography.

Exposition Opens a Three-Day Run," *The New York Times*, October 18, 1980.

⁵⁷⁵ *Celebration*, 4–7.

⁵⁷⁶ *On Collecting Photographs* (New York: The Association of International Photography Art Dealers, 1983).

⁵⁷⁷ *On Collecting Photographs*, 10.

I have intended in this dissertation to dig back into the foundation of these succinct and confident answers, to understand where the questions themselves came from, and to observe the messy and often contradictory process of addressing them. Rather than taking these ideas as given, it seems important to understand what was at stake in their formation. Museum collections are now filled with carefully stewarded vintage photographs by recognized photographers from across the medium's history, and it is often from these collections that new scholarship proceeds, even as scholars continue to question and shift their parameters and priorities. Institutional collections are filled with limited edition portfolios too, but these are still rarely appreciated as historical and aesthetic objects in their own right. (This is made plain by the fact that although digitized collections on museum websites certainly include portfolio prints, the portfolios themselves—including cases, colophons, and so on—are almost never documented.) The values established during the 1970s were an essential part of creating a field where none existed before, and many of the individuals and organizations that were critical to their formulation remain to be given their proper due in photography's history. I am not calling for a hagiography, and again there is much work to be done—and is being done—to rectify the omissions and myopias of this earlier generation. But the photo boom was the moment when a tiny network of acolytes broadened into a movement, and as a participant in this field myself, I believe it is worth examining and contextualizing its inception.

When I began this dissertation, I knew that I wanted to delve into a period in photography's history that I saw as both well-known and curiously neglected. As I mention in my introduction, Keith Davis has written a short but impressively detailed and painstakingly documented bird's eye view of the photo boom,⁵⁷⁸ one that offers a vivid sense of the

⁵⁷⁸ Davis, "The Photo Boom," 388-397.

movement's scope and complexity. From Davis's chapter and other sources—several of which I discussed in my literature review—I soon realized that the photo boom was an enormous as well as essentially uncharted topic, and I took several steps to narrow my focus. Rather than attempt to capture its whole breadth in a single narrative, I chose to examine the 1970s photography market, a complicated entity in and of itself. From there, I selected a set of slices or cross-sections by which to examine some of what I perceived as the market's foundational values and practices. The heart of this dissertation is in many ways my excavation of the term *vintage*, a concept that remains so influential and ubiquitous as to be nearly invisible in the context of both the photography market and the museum world. *Vintage* has become basically synonymous with authenticity and originality, and as a result the vintage print is still the ur-object for both institutional and private collectors of photographs. Curators and scholars often acknowledge the term's insufficiency, but what has been missing is any kind of thorough historical contextualization of its roots and its reach. My task, then, was not only to follow the evolution of this concept over the course of the 1970s, but to consider both its antecedents and the ways in which it influenced realms of the photography world that went beyond its obvious ramifications within the market *per se*.

Although *vintage print* is a term reserved exclusively for photographs, it seemed clear that it harkened back to a tradition of print connoisseurship. But while the relationship between photography and printmaking might appear self-evident—as evinced by the frequent co-existence of prints and photographs within single museum departments—I found that very little had been written about the moment of transition and overlap between the revival of lithography in the 1950s, the rise of multiples as an art form, and the advent of the photo boom in the 1970s. And yet, both published and unpublished sources from the period throw these resonances into

high relief. They make it evident that participants in the photography market were well aware that they were borrowing directly from the print market in their efforts to lend legitimacy and consistency to the trade in photographs. The imbrication of these two art forms within the space of the market complicates, I think, parallel efforts to insist upon photography's purported exceptionalism and its distinction from other mediums. This insistence has been a hallmark not only of photographic modernism in the early twentieth century, but of postmodernist critique.

My consideration of *vintage* can also help us understand how this concept in turn engendered other aspects of the photography market and its corollary institutions which, at first glance, seem unrelated. As I have shown, without the idea that photographic prints can be considered unique and irreplaceable, there would have been little reason to develop methods for preserving and restoring them, nor would there have been much temptation to falsify them.

Professional photograph conservation, along with museums and universities, is often erroneously considered distinct from the commercial world of the art market. And yet all of these fields and institutions are tightly interwoven, and there is an ongoing play between their practices and values. The photography market and its emphasis on the vintage print has cemented photography's status as a legitimate medium not only for aesthetic appreciation and financial investment, but for academic consideration as well as careful material study and scientific analysis.

Delving into these ideas also led me to necessarily consider the obverse of vintage prints—in other words, new prints. While the idea of *vintage* applies only to objects made in the past, the photography market has of course also had to grapple with how to value newly made works, and in turn has shaped photographers' practice, including how photography is taught in the programs and workshops that began to proliferate at universities and other institutions

starting in the 1970s. (Just as a PhD is now a frequent prerequisite for curatorial positions in museums, an MFA is increasingly part of the path toward a professional art career.) Considering the creation of rarity—essentially the regulation of supply and demand—within the photography market sheds light on the field’s ongoing debates about the medium’s relationship to originality and reproducibility, and how these tensions have played out in very practical and tangible ways outside the realm of academic speculation. If the first three chapters are, in different ways, essentially concerned with historical antecedents, historical objects, and the preservation of the past, the fourth chapter begins to consider how these ideas played out over the course of the 1970s, how they affected real shifts in practice at that time—as in the production of photographs in limited editions and portfolios—and even how those shifts have carried into the present. If the photo boom started as a culmination of decades of effort to achieve recognition for photography as a creative medium, it ended with the medium’s integration into established systems of both aesthetic and intellectual appreciation, and commercial speculation.

I have intended this dissertation to be one possible starting point for what I hope is a growing interest in this important period in photography’s institutional history. As such, I expect that one of its significant contributions is the wealth of little-studied primary source material that I have brought together for this project. Collections of auction, gallery, and dealer catalogues for photography are hard to come by, and while these sections of my bibliography remain incomplete, they are more thorough than others I have been able to find.⁵⁷⁹ Likewise, while newspaper and magazine articles must be interpreted with a healthy dose of skepticism, they

⁵⁷⁹ That said, the “Catalogues Listed” section in Gary Edwards’s *International Guide to Nineteenth-Century Photographers and Their Works* is an important antecedent and a useful complement to the catalogue sections of my bibliography. It diverges from mine in that it is dedicated solely to catalogues that include nineteenth-century photographs, and extends well into the 1980s. However, it includes a number of catalogues of which I have not yet been able to locate copies. Gary Edwards, *International Guide to Nineteenth-Century Photographers and Their Works* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1988).

offer an important glimpse at how ideas about photography circulated outside the channels of academia or the museum. The photo boom was of course in large part about the institutionalization and rarefication of (certain kinds of) photography, but it was also a period of popular enthusiasm and attention. Taken together, I believe that catalogues and mass media can begin to fill in some of the texture and nuance that has often been overlooked in critical rebuttals to this period. Auction catalogues in particular are often overlooked as primary resources on individual photographs as well as larger bodies of work, containing material and historical details that are often difficult to discover elsewhere.

The photography market itself has ebbed and flowed since the 1970s, and has undergone significant changes. AIPAD remains an important organization for the field, particularly within North America, but the largest annual photography fair is now Paris Photo, which began in 1997 and often includes more than 200 international dealers, in addition to art book publishers and sellers.⁵⁸⁰ That fair's popularity suggests the medium's ever-expanding global appeal, and indeed, photography has become so integrated with the rest of the art world that the boundaries between them, which were already starting to blur by the end of the 1970s, have in some ways become even less distinct. Speaking in 2004, photography curator Judith Keller remarked that Cindy Sherman, among others like her, had "changed the market entirely" by producing large-scale color prints and marketing them in the context of contemporary art, "selling work for increasing amounts of money, and selling out entire editions."⁵⁸¹ As mentioned in a previous chapter, some photographers at the turn of the 1980s and thereafter distanced themselves from the recently established photography milieu, already regarding it as too traditional or restrictive,

⁵⁸⁰ "About—Paris Photo," accessed December 30, 2022, <https://www.parisphoto.com/en-gb/fair/about.html>.

⁵⁸¹ Amanda Doenitz, "The State of the Photography Market," *Art on Paper* 9, no. 2 (2004): 24. Judith Keller is the senior curator of photography at the J. Paul Getty Museum.

and declining even to call themselves photographers rather than artists. And, as Keller reiterates, many artists using photography but operating in the realm of contemporary art found themselves able to earn significantly more money for their work.

But of course history is never quite so clear-cut or linear. In Chapter Two, I cited Cindy Sherman's *Untitled #96* (1981) and Andreas Gursky's *Rhein II* (1999) as the two most expensive photographs ever sold at auction, at \$3,890,500 and \$4,338,500 respectively. I wrote that chapter in late 2021, and as I write this conclusion a year later, I note that, as of May 2022, the highest price ever paid for a photograph at auction is now \$12,412,500, for a print of Man Ray's Surrealist *Le Violon d'Ingres* (1924).⁵⁸² [Figure 85] In November 2022, an example of Edward Steichen's *The Flatiron* (1904, printed 1905), an icon of Pictorialism, printed in a rare combination of platinum and gum bichromate, sold for nearly as much, at \$11,840,000.⁵⁸³ [Figure 86] The prices of artworks sold at auction are dependent on a host of factors, and I don't intend to characterize the state of photography on the basis of two extraordinary sales on the secondary market. But it is worth remarking, as Philippe Garner did recently, that within a decade or two of the photo boom, many of the "great" nineteenth-century photographs had been incorporated into institutional collections and thus removed permanently from the market, spurring new attention to later eras of photography.⁵⁸⁴ Commenting on the recent blockbuster sales at Christie's, he mused, "I work with a very different type of collector than those I met in the 1970s—today's collectors are exacting, and the focus is on masterpieces."⁵⁸⁵ Such so-called

⁵⁸² *The Surrealist World of Rosalind Gerstein Jacobs and Melvin Jacobs* (New York, Christie's, May 13, 2022), lot 615, <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-6368089>.

⁵⁸³ *Visionary: The Paul G. Allen Collection*, (New York: Christie's, November 8, 2022), lot 4, <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-6397095>.

⁵⁸⁴ "How Photography Became Accepted as a Fine Art—with a Little Help from 50 Years of Photographs Sales at Christie's | Christie's," accessed December 31, 2022, <https://www.christies.com/features/five-decades-of-photographs-sales-at-christies-12581-1.aspx>.

⁵⁸⁵ "How Photography Became Accepted as a Fine Art."

masterpieces, now as in the 1970s, are often rare, pristine, vintage prints of historical work by well-known practitioners. Further, the abundance and novelty that characterized the photo boom is essentially a thing of the past. And both the tentativeness and exuberance of the early collectors have gradually given way to an arguably savvier approach, one that still builds on the turn to investment that I explored in my last chapter.

Meanwhile, in 2019, French photography dealer Bruno Tartarin and English collector and writer Michael Diemar began publishing a free bi-annual magazine called *The Classic*. The magazine, as the name implies, is intended to cover the market for “classic” photography, loosely defined as “everything that isn’t contemporary photography.”⁵⁸⁶ According to Tartarin,

When the modern photography market as we know it today was established around 1970, the focus was very much on works from the past, the 19th century, the Avant Garde of the interwar years. Around 2000, the focus changed and contemporary photography became increasingly dominant, at fairs, auctions, and in the press. But as a photography dealer with over 20 years’ experience, I can tell you that it’s still the classic photography, the Man Rays and the Gustave Le Grays, that underpins the whole of the photography market and gives it credibility.⁵⁸⁷

As Michael Diemar, *The Classic*’s editor-in-chief acknowledges, “the reasons for the magazine’s existence are essentially commercial,” but its focus is seemingly less on financial structures or investment opportunities, and more on the market’s social and institutional underpinnings.⁵⁸⁸

Diemar characterizes the magazine as an attempt to replicate the kinds of conversations he has had with “dealers, collectors, curators, auction experts, conservators, archivists, editors.”⁵⁸⁹ In fact, I would argue that *The Classic* has in this sense picked up the mantle of *The Print Collector’s Newsletter*. In the past three years, the magazine has published features on and

⁵⁸⁶ Michael Pritchard, “Free Magazine: The Classic—A New Magazine about Classic Photography,” March 24, 2019, <https://britishphotohistory.ning.com/profiles/blogs/free-magazine-the-classic-a-new-magazine-about-classic-photograph>.

⁵⁸⁷ Pritchard.

⁵⁸⁸ Michael Diemar, “From the Editor,” *The Classic*, no. 1 (Spring 2019): 5.

⁵⁸⁹ Diemar, 5.

articles by photo world experts outside the realm of academia,⁵⁹⁰ alongside illustrated auction reports and articles showcasing institutional collections in the United States and Europe. *The Classic* arguably lacks the rigor and scope of *The Print Collector's Newsletter*, and its longevity remains to be seen. But its emphasis on spotlighting a tight-knit community of photography enthusiasts speaks to the early days of the boom, albeit with perhaps a whiff of nostalgia and a continued focus on North American and European contexts.

I wonder whether this initiative is emblematic of a field at a certain inflection point—or at least, a moment of self-reflection. In 1991, in an unpublished essay about the short-lived, New York-based Foto Gallery (1974–1984), A. D. Coleman remarked, “The historians—who are just beginning to make their first tentative inquiries into the ‘60s—haven’t yet gotten to the 1970s in photography. This is probably for the best, because we’re still too close to the latter decade to be able to gain any clear perspective on it.” He went on to posit, with characteristic foresight, that “sometime in the first part of the 21st century,” the historians might “finally get around to the 70s.”⁵⁹¹ Academic scholarship moves slowly, but as I write this I am aware of several other dissertations, memoirs, and articles—in progress or recently completed but not yet published—that take up aspects of the 1970s photo boom. In the faster-paced world of institutional programming, this attention is evident as well. In my introduction I mentioned the *Seen Through the Collector's Lens* symposium held at the Frick Collection in 2015.⁵⁹² I also referred earlier to the recent commemoration of Christie’s first London photography auction. In early 2020, the Center for Creative Photography mounted an exhibition about LIGHT Gallery and held a three-

⁵⁹⁰ These have included Philippe Garner; dealers Julian Sander and Robert Hershkowitz; curators Jeff Rosenheim, Clément Chéroux, Sophie Gordon, and Jim Ganz; and conservators Paul Messier and Adrienne Lundgren, to name just a few.

⁵⁹¹ A. D. Coleman, “Foto Gallery 1974–84” (unpublished manuscript, November 1991). My thanks to Mr. Coleman for sharing this document with me.

⁵⁹² “Seen through the Collector’s Lens.”

day symposium that felt more like a family reunion, bringing together a wide swath of photography dealers, curators, scholars, and educators, many of whom got their start in the early days of the photo boom.⁵⁹³ Still more recently, in February 2022, Swann Galleries held an auction, *Fine Photographs: Celebrating 70 Years of Photographs at Swann*,⁵⁹⁴ marking the seventy-year anniversary of the 1952 Marshall sale, the first photography auction in the United States.⁵⁹⁵ The auction was accompanied by a small run of facsimile copies of the Marshall sale catalogue, as well as a public conversation between Deborah Rogal, Swann’s current Director of Photographs; Denise Bethel, who held the position from 1980 to 1990; and Daile Kaplan, Swann’s Vice President and head of the Photographs and Photobooks Department from 1990 to 2020.⁵⁹⁶ There is an awareness, I think, that direct links to photography’s past are becoming fewer and more tenuous, lending a certain urgency to these historical projects and perhaps feeding the desire to “boost” the community that exists now, as Bruno Tartarin and Michael Diemar put it.

The 1970s photo boom was, as I have said, a period both pivotal and isolated, but its reverberations have been long lasting. Few people today remember or acknowledge how much of the early photography market was borrowed from the print world, but nearly every curator, dealer, and collector knows to look for an artist’s signature, ask about edition sizes, and determine whether a print is vintage. Even as scholars forge new ways of examining the histories

⁵⁹³ *The Qualities of LIGHT: The Story of a Pioneering New York City Photography Gallery* ran from December 14, 2019 to May 9, 2020, and the symposium, *Legacies of LIGHT—A Three-Day Celebration*, was held from January 17–19, 2020.

⁵⁹⁴ Swann Auction Galleries, *Fine Photographs: Celebrating 70 Years of Photographs at Swann* (New York, February 10, 2022), <https://imprint.swannalleries.com/photographs/fine-photographs-70-years/2594>.

⁵⁹⁵ Swann Auction Galleries, *A Panoramic History of the Art of Photography*.

⁵⁹⁶ Deborah Rogal, Denise Bethel, and Daile Kaplan, *Making Market History: 70 Years of Photography at Swann*, February 7, 2022.

of photography, they build on a robust foundation of information—about practitioners, technologies, mediums, movements, industries—that was largely absent before the 1970s. And I argue that as the field continues to question many of its received values, it is accordingly worth examining its biases about expertise and scholarship. The fact that the photography market was and is a commercial enterprise should not obscure the ways in which dealers and collectors have contributed to the formation of this discipline. Photography has always been imbricated with commerce, and to resist or ignore that fact is to elide a critical part of the way we understand the medium, its significance, and its reach.

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I have limited this and the following section only to publications that I was able to find and see in person, and thus these sections remain necessarily incomplete. Catalogues from this period have not often been collected systematically, and can be difficult to find. To my knowledge, there exists no comprehensive bibliography of photography auction, dealer, or gallery catalogues from the 1970s, and this is a preliminary step in that direction.

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In addition to publications and periodicals, I have included newspaper and magazine articles from the 1970s and prior, as these comprise an important body of primary source material for this dissertation and for an understanding of this period. Thus, although such articles are often omitted from academic bibliographies, I believe that they are essential documents, and have included them.

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