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The Institutionalization of Photographic Industry and the Society

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to highlight on photography as an excellent art work. This article on photography is based on the authenticity and social influence of the photographer. In discussing the paper, some attempts have been made to examine the nature and dynamics of photography, as well as the appreciation of photographs as a human achievement. There is also a general overview on photography in Ghana, outlining in particular the visual aesthetics of the photographic industry, and the specialized fields that exist. The paper concludes that the use of technological photography in teaching at all levels should be encouraged. It is when we add our personal vision to the technology of photography then we cross that line from mere reproduction to transformation. With this shift from science to art, we begin speaking with a vocabulary of aesthetics.

Keywords: Photography; Camera; Visual elements; Creativity; Communication.

1. Introduction

Photography came along with many meanings which is subjective to every individual and how one perceives and understands the word. The best way to understand photography is as a language with its own vocabulary and grammar. How these 'words' work together to give understandable and meaningful descriptions is the realm of composition. In the mid-19th Century, it was known as "mirror with memory" and in the 20th century, it was referred to as "reflection of photographer's point of view" (Bayer, 1978).

The term "photograph" was coined in 1839 by Sir John Herschel and is based on the Greek words (phos) light and (graphé) representation by means of lines or drawing, hence the meaning drawing with light (Galer, 1999; Graham and Bolton, 1990). It was around this same period that Jaques Louis Mande Daguerre improved on Josef Niepce's observation. According to Gernsheim (1965), on the day Daguerre's invention was announced in 1839, there was as much excitement as after a victorious battle. This was when Daguerre discovered that an image could be made permanent by immersing it in silver salt. Prior to the invention of photography, various scientific discoveries and developments in optics, photosensitive chemicals and optical devices were made. Some notable discoveries include the Camera Obscura (dark chamber) and the Pinhole Camera. The discovery of the chemical silver nitrate and silver chloride by Albertus Magnus, Louis Jacques Mande Daguerre and Georges Fabricious respectively and the photochemical effect of light darkening some chemicals, also discovered by Wilhelm Homberg (Morgan and Thaler, 1991). Photography is the art of producing visible images on sensitive surfaces directly or indirectly by the action of light or other form of radiant energy. Development processes in photography also grew more scientific as innovations in gelatin manufacture became firmly established. These developments actually establish the fact that photography as we have today, was not invented by one person but that it evolved and the inventor was a composite international figure. It is, after all, a strange crossbreed of art and science.

Photography has been a form of artistic self-expression. For many photographers, that is where the subject begins and ends. Their aim is to refine a personal vision, whatever the subject to create the most beautiful, the most moving, or the most communicative image possible (Prakel, 2010).

2. Early Historic Photographic Images

A school of thought in narrating the visual photographic communication said it began with the times of the rock and cave arts, to ideograms, the alphabet, art of the book, printing press, masters of type, breaking grid, avant-garde, the modernists and finally to this age of computer (Romano *et al.*, 1999).

According to Gilbert (1992) Josef Niepce managed in 1826 and recorded a fuzzy version of the view of his window after an exposure of eight hours by the use of a pewter plate. This photograph is considered to be the first permanent photograph ever recorded. This photograph is known in photography circle as 'heliograph'.

This has been indicated in figure 1.

Figure-1. Heliograph (The First permanent Photograph)



According to [Gernsheim \(1965\)](#), Niepce agreed to enter into partnership with Louis Daguerre in 1829. However, in four years later, Niepce died but Daguerre continued and soon discovered a way of developing photographic plates, a process which greatly reduced the exposure time from eight hours down to half an hour. His invention (Daguerreotype) also had better detailing than that of Niepce's. This has been illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure-2. The First Daguerreotype



Source: www.scribd.com

Figure-3. Image of Daguerre (a Daguerreotype)



Source: www.bing.com/images/search?

Bayer (1978) in the photographer's Gallery made it known that Aldolphe Smith and John Thomson were the first photographers who made the whole world aware as they photographed the "street life in London" (1877) showing the hardships and problems faced by the ever-growing underprivileged population of London.

Oscar - Rejlander also photographed orphan children in the streets of London performing such humble tasks as cleaning boots and opening carriage doors. Some dedicated photographers also produced the "Great Depression in America" when farmers were driven from their land in the dust bowl and migrating to the west.

The real multiplication of circulating photographs took place with the introduction of the half-tone plate in the 1880s. This made possible the inexpensive mechanical reproduction of photographs in newspapers, periodicals, books and ads.

Photography, seen today, was introduced in the world two centuries ago. It is an unquestionable fact that the evolution of photography cannot be credited to only one man because it came about as a result of observations made by alchemists and chemists through experiments with light.

The tool normally used to carry out the process of photography is the camera. A camera is an electronic device that is used for recording still photographs and motion pictures (movies, videos etc.) and it comes in two ways; manual and digital. Photography is then a means of recording forever the things one see for a moment and record. It is better than memory, because it does not only recalls things to the mind but it enables us to show others with absolute realism, what we have done, where we have been, what we have seen, even what we have thought. It has become accepted as a means of potential achievements for both young and old, whether used as a method of expression or for recording, or as a contemporary means of relating to life and society as institutions.

The objects and technologies of cameras with films and charged coupled device (CCD) chips have constituted the very nature of travel, as sites turn into sights; they have constructed what is worth going to 'sightsee' and what images and memories should be brought back (Urry, 2002).

Currently one can assume that photography has successfully entered into many homes in the Ghanaian society. It is not surprising to say that, out of every three families, there are at least one or more cameras borne by nuclear members, it continues to lead all other hobbies in the world over and an easy way to become self-employed. Photography has also become an effective new communication tool in enhancing messages (either for advertising or for book illustrations). For example, one can conveniently say that, the success of any good design is measured by how well its message is conveyed and the effect the design has on the recipient.

Communication is the key to successful creativity in photography (Prakel, 2010). This is suggestive to say that, ones meaning is identified from a photograph, the photographer's communication becomes complete and the import of the message made. Creativity is at a premium as only unique and striking images will rise to the surfaces of the image-mass and be memorable, but this is individual creativity used on behalf of others. Photographers can choose or change the following elements: tonal values, create and alter form and volume; colour; view point and perspective, selection and composition (in the smaller sense of the arrangement of objects); camera controls (shutter speed and aperture); and lighting (studio lighting) that may be under the photographer's control.

Creativity is like an organism that needs to be nurtured in order to grow and flourish. It needs to be exercised and fed ideas and imagery - without these it will die. Creativity then becomes a strong successful imagery draws from the process of constant cross-fertilization with ideas based on the photographer's new cultural references and alternative technical processes found in a profound composition. To buttress this, (Prakel, 2010) opines that, composition is the process of identifying the formal elements and organizing them to produce a final image; a mental editing used by a photographer, which makes the final image and easily 'read' by the viewer. Sometimes photographic composition includes the manipulation of both the aperture and shutter speed, light, depth of field, perspective of the subject. But more often, it is concentrated on selection and emphasis.

May (2000) buttresses this when he says that, for most people, the best way to improve the quality of their pictures is to spend a little longer over composing the shot and checking that the lighting conditions are right. The formal elements of photography being the qualities are characteristics of the subject – they are not processes. The principles of design are what you do with the elements-the formal elements being the ingredients and the principles of design as the cookery. For photography, design principles include: variety, pattern, contrast, symmetrical and asymmetrical balance and movement. Their use produces an image that displays unity, where each part of the image is necessary and work together for good. Evocatively, this principle in photography has overtly been institutionalized by both amateur and professional photographers in Ghana.

3. Types of Photography

The ability of photography to objectify the world as an exhibition, to arrange the entire globe for visual communication is particularly stressed by Sontag (1979):

"Photography's main effect is to convert the world into a department store or a museum-without-walls in which every subject is depreciated into an article of consumption, promoted into an item for aesthetic appreciation" (p10).

Mobile photographers and touring photographic reproductions visualized and mobilized the globe by putting it on spectacular display. With capitalism's arrangement of the world as a 'department store' "the proliferation and circulation of representations achieved a spectacular and virtually inescapable global magnitude" (Greenblatt, 1991).

Specialized fields in photography namely architectural photography, portrait photography, industrial photography, fashion photography, landscape photography, nature photography, marine photography, sports

photography, photo-journalism and reportage, product photography, advertising photography are all terms given to the craft of communicating personal experience through a sequence of images. It is a process of understanding, translation and expression. Decisive, dramatic, exotic or glamorous images are frequently used to illustrate the written story and attract the viewer to read the text.

In another instance, photography has been divided into three major types. [Feininger \(1968\)](#) says they include:

1. Reproductive utilitarian photography
2. Documentary illustrative photography and
3. Creative interpretative photography

To explain them, [Feininger \(1968\)](#) emphasizes that reproduction utilitarian photography is used in connection with a specific profession, business, industry or science. He goes on to say that, its purpose is to record facts and events and preserve them for immediate or future use. He further says that, the closer this sort of picture is to actuality, the greater its usefulness, the ideal being the reproduction.

Again, [Feininger \(1968\)](#) asserts that, this type of picture is not made by professional photographers but by laboratory technicians, scientists, engineers, air force personnel, dentists and researchers, etc. who use photography as an important part of their regular work. To them he says, a photograph is a record whose value is directly proportional to its accuracy, clarity and objectivity. He ends by citing some example under this type of photography. They include; photo-micrographs, aerial photographs, medical and industrial x-ray photographs, catalogue photographs and photographs used for illustration of training manuals and instruction booklets.

Secondly, [Osborne \(2000\)](#) is of the view that, documentary illustrative photograph's primary function is to inform and educate. He further says, they contain the essence of a good documentary photograph: subject and content of the picture are factual but the form in which they are represented is artistic. He cites some examples under this type of photography as picture stories, magazines, political and news photographs and the majority of amateur snapshots and travel pictures.

In respect of creative-interpretative photography, [Sontag \(1979\)](#) stresses that the prime functions of this type is to stimulate and enrich the mind. He also points out that, whereas documentary photography is primarily concerned with specific subjects, facts and events, creative photography is concerned with the essence of things and its interpretation. He further reveals that, in this type of photography, the subject becomes a vehicle for an idea, a symbol that represents something other than itself. He concludes with the agreement that, with this type of photography, feelings are more important than facts, and the subject of the picture is a mood.

It could be said that, this intuitive feelings has been the back bone of photography and both amateur and photography professionals are using it today for creative results in the art of photography; being it commercial or candid and aerial or creative interpretative.

4. Photographic Communication

Photography is a picture language, the newest version of the oldest form of graphic communication. It is so commending partly because it is the closest thing we have to on international language. In a photographic circles, images are organized to narrate a story. Unlike the spoken or written word, it is a form of communication that can be internationally understood. This being a means of communication, it must be successful by being appreciated and understood by the audience (both literates and illiterates) for which it was intended. This gives a photograph added meaning and a photographer's added responsibility to social activities in all human endeavours.

To buttress this, [Hirsch and Robert \(2014\)](#), also say that, pictures possess their own native structure that may defy explanation regardless of how many words are wrapped around them. Most people who make photographs share the common bond of wanting to represent (commemorate) a likeness of something that is important in their life. (p.13)

He continues to say that, individuals make photographs because words often fail to adequately describe and express their relationship to the world. Pictures are an essential component of how humans observe, celebrate, remember and communicate.

In view of this, [Essuman \(2014\)](#) states that, it is necessary that photography is used to identify life practices, so that people are approached with alacrity. Since photographs represent circumstances that cannot be expressed in any other way but, rather gives a vivid idea of what has been experienced, it is through photographic images therefore that life experiences can be analysed and best interpreted.

Social photography is the catch-all title for the photography of people, whether singly or in groups. Social photography began to shake itself loose from the formality it once had through the introduction of an alternative approach or style known as reportage.

Pictures are a photographer's means of expression as a writer's means are words. And as a writer must choose a major field of work-journalism, fiction, non-fiction, biography, poetry etc. so a photographer must choose a specific field, each field having a specific purpose. Some of these purposes are:

4.1. Information

The initial theme of communication might suggest one of several broad purposes or genres of photographs. One of the uses of photograph is to document the reality of a situation. To buttress this, [Hirsch and Robert \(2014\)](#), say that if you are a photographer your job is to use photography to bear witness to what you see and sometimes how you think about what you are seeing.

Dyer (2007) also stresses that photography once enjoyed a reputation as the medium of record and evidence-‘the camera never lies’. This is the domain of the documentary photographer. Documentary photography, however shares this heritage-the idea of ‘truth’ and of bearing witness to events. To document means to record (Prakel, 2010). Documentary photography covers a range of activities from the political activism of concerned photography to straight photojournalism based on news gathering.

A documentary photograph is one that has a narrative, reportorial point of view. The documentary photograph often has a hardedge look and can be brutal in its faculty. Other times, a documentary photograph can generate warm feelings. The documentary image has a high degree of perceived credibility. Documentary photograph as well as the majority of photographs found in picture magazines, newspapers, manuals, scientific publications and pictures used for visual education belong to this category. Both landscape and photojournalistic images also fit into this category, and finally, an environmental portrait is also seen as a form of documentary image because it places the person in a story-telling milieu. The *purpose* behind this type of *photography* is not solely to record a news story, but also to broaden our understanding of our *environment*, to educate people or to enable them to make correct decisions. With documentary images especially, a professional must consciously select those photographs that provide the viewer with enough physical cues to correctly interpret contents.

Aerial images are closely allied to documentary images, like an aerial news photo of a forest fire. Other times, these photographs rely upon trained specialists and computer enhanced processes to bring the images to realization, as in mapping large land forms or the surfaces of planets. In these instances, they are used to study geography and geopolitics, and because they often are commissioned by governments for security purposes or businesses for proprietary reasons, their availability is restricted (Feininger, 1968).

4.2. Slanted Information

This is the province of commercial and advertising photography and political propaganda. The description covers all types of images created for the purpose of commerce. The tenacity of such pictures is to make the subject glamorous and more desirable. The goal is the selling of a service, or an idea. Commercial photography is a large sector in the applied arts and deals with images that require different degrees of creative input. Product and pack shot photography is the art of quite literally putting a product ‘in the bestlight’-showing off its qualities to make it desirable through the use of props and setting (for context), and lighting (to reveal its physical qualities, such as colour or texture). Product information is rarely conveyed in these images intended to make the product wanted.

Commercial photographs have a persuasive thrust. They are the most frequently used category of photographs. Often, they are preconceived to have a certain style, mood, or subject matter that will appeal to a target audience of consumers. This category is the lifeblood of professional photography, since it covers such fields as advertising commercial products (fashion, food, hardware, toys, etc.) as well as providing essential records of industrial work (engineering, building, research projects and the like).

4.3. Discovery

Medical/ Scientific images often are captured with special films, like infrared, or with intricate cameras that are tied to electron microscopes for extreme close ups. These photographs sometimes because images of haunting beauty. Because the camera is in many respects superior to the eye, it can be used to make discoveries in the realm of vision. Precision and pictorial accuracy are the keys. This is the field of research and scientific photography, close-up and telephotography, ultra-wide angle and high speed photography, abstract photographs and photograms.

Hirsch (2000) adds that scientific and medical photography certainly aims to provide an accurate record and would not usually be describes as “creative”. The intention is to capture what is there in as clear and unambiguous manner as possible. This type of photograph is focused in medical and science magazines and news-papers, academic journals, and sometimes, annual reports (Feininger, 1968). The purpose of such pictures is to open new fields for exploration, to widen man’s visual and intellectual horizons and to enrich his life.

4.4. Recording

Photography provides the simplest and cheapest means of preserving facts in picture form. Architects and interior designers need to overcome optical illusions in photographs of their buildings and interiors. Architectural photographers used view camera that can manipulate perspective so that buildings look structurally sound, with crisp right angles and regular geometry. Just as the architect will have considered light and how the building fits into its location and environment, the photographer will have to become familiar with the building and location to see how and when it is best lit by natural light.

Catalogue pictures, reproductions of works of art, micro-filming of documents and books, identification pictures, which are mostly used in criminal -investigations, and certain kinds of documentary photographs, fall in this category. Used for recording purposes, photography preserves knowledge and facts in easily accessible form suitable for widest dissemination and utilization.

4.5. Entertainment

Photography provides an endless source of entertainment and pleasure; motion pictures, candid amateur photographs, travel pictures, photographic annuals (manuals) and feature stories in picture magazines are the types

that fall in this category. Not quite as formal as its journalistic roots, the reportage style of entertainment photography treats the entertainment as an event to be examined photographically. Details in unique and intriguing images reveal more about feelings of the participants than the formality of the occasion. The move to digital technology has revolutionised the production of social and entertainment albums as well as the introduction of heavily styled digital manipulations of social imagery. This move has also given birth to online photography where photographers immediately send pictures taken to their prospective clients through online manipulation to their phones for viewing and other intended purposes.

4.6. Self-Expression

An increasing number of talented, creative people find in photography a relatively inexpensive means of self-expression. Almost any subject can be photographed in an unlimited number of different ways and more and more photographers seek new and more expressive forms of photographic rendition through which they share with others their own visions of the world, their feeling, ideas and thoughts. Taking intent as a method of classification, there is a distinction in a category of images created for self-expression and for artistic purposes-photography that is not done primarily for commercial purposes. [Prakel \(2010\)](#) emphasizes that the extreme of this category would be imagery produced as a part of an art therapy workshop, possibly only intended to be seen by the photographer or patient and the therapist. There is then the bulk of imagery done to please the self or perhaps just a group of others. The category begins to shade into the commercial world when images are sold for profit. This may; however, be opportunistic and not the original intent behind the creation of the image.

All experiences were “democratized” through their translation into inexpensive photographic images ([Sontag, 1977](#)). This is a society where participating in events becomes tantamount to seeing and capturing them as spectacular ‘imagescapes’:

It would not be wrong to speak of people having a compulsion to photograph: to turn experience itself into a way of seeing. Ultimately, having an experience becomes identical with taking a photograph of it, and participating in a public event comes more and more to be equivalent to looking at it in photographed form..... Today everything exists to end in a photograph ([Sontag, 1977](#)).

Thus, tourism is one social practice that simultaneously shaped and was shaped by the ‘compulsive’ photographic culture of cameras and images: “it seems positively unnatural to travel for pleasure without taking a camera along. Photographs will offer indisputable evidence that the trip was made, that the program was carried out, that fun was had”. This observation leads us to the more speculative statement that “travel: becomes a strategy for accumulating photographs” ([Gursory and McCleary, 2004](#)).

From the above fields on the empirical evidence of the use of camera, it could be proceeded to establish a theory and describe design as an unconscious exercise in art, an expression of universal harmony which is also realized in art and science.

5. Modern Technology

The bedrocks of technology are science and technology. Science supplies theories and hypothetical principles, whereas, art translates the theories into drawing. Other disciplines (social sciences, and humanities) translate the drawing into tangible productions as related to each of them. Such tangible products are expected to enhance technological development. Relating the above to photographic study, one can therefore say that photography technology is an aspect of photographic studies that applies scientific principles and art drawing to designing. Photography technology embraces computer photography technology, for teaching digital imaging techniques.

Computer photography technology can be defined as a photography in which a computer is used to work on photographic details or to produce electronic image by digitalizing the frequency and series of events within the structure of a composition. Focusing on the present innovation of digital photography, it is necessary to study and know how the integration of technology in photography can bring about an awareness of specially made devices that can enhance the skill and widening the knowledge of a photography technologist in the study of image and its nature, as well as equipping them more in terms of creativity.

6. Conclusion

The paper concludes that photography industry in Ghana is very dynamic and encompasses wide spectrum of potentials for developments. In order to explore the dynamism and the opportunities inherent in photography technology and relate them to the photography industry in Ghana, there should be an agency dedicated to censoring and promoting photography, art and culture.

It is apparent that, photography is a dynamic tool that gives wider opportunities for records keeping, proof of evidence, recall of interesting memories and for investigation. The great potential of these photographic images of the above-mentioned prominent photographers are believable evidence and documentary. It is now evident that the photographer is therefore important in daily life as his photographs cross all language barriers, for they can tell a story without the need of words. His means of expression are accepted and influence the work of other photographers as well as the society throughout the world.

One way of meeting the visual aesthetics of the photographic industry is through the visual images reproduced in camera operation and printing processes. The origins of the invention of the camera which has its applications in almost every field of endeavor today, telemedicine, film, communications etc. is a product of artistic ingenuity and such is the magic of photographic expressivity. It is often the quality of their research that leads the photojournalist to a new angle on an existing story.

The paper also concludes that, composition results from the ways the photographer arranges the subject matter and harness light, combining the two through the guidance of design principles to create a coherent, aesthetically pleasing visual expression. A photograph without a good composition can be usable because composition sometimes is hard to define and good composition is even harder to find. In pursuit of development and advancement, general innovations have evolved helping man to develop a civilization and a way of existence that has its ancestry from early times.

With the introduction and ongoing development of digital photography equipment, the medium of photography had become far more accessible and tangible to the wider public. For many amateurs and semi-professional cameras and technology that effectively do the thinking have taken away the control of constructing a well-composed crafted and considered image, with the artistic and creative process being overshadowed by gimmicks, plug-ins and effects.

There is the need for creativity and freshness in photography to enhance the aesthetics of captured social activities. Creativity is like one's health – it suffers without proper food and regular exercise. A full-time education will almost show how to research for ideas, how to develop, refine and express those ideas in one's own work.

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