

Topic – The Death of Photography (?)

The magic of a photograph exists in the photographers' distinct ability to capture the essence of an experience. A being. An emotion. The 'stars' of photography in the 1960's rose to success through the way *their* eye worked behind the camera and not due to the eye of the camera itself. Advanced technologies, together with heightened sharing capabilities provided by the internet and social media, mean that a sea of photographs are produced and transmitted daily. One could view this as the death of photography, or one could see it as an incredible evolution that makes way for new forms of photographic expression.

Photography has continually evolved since 19th century and current changes are an extension of that evolution. Visionary photographers of the past, like Tony Armstrong-Jones (Lord Snowdon), were instrumental in the evolution. Taking devices available to them and creating *their* vision *through* the devices. Their vision made them great, not the device.

Snowdon sought fun and freedom and applied methods to his work that broke existing photographic conventions. He took his models out of the studio and into the 'real-world' to play. The fresh and lively nature of his vision captured his audiences' attention.

Although his work was instrumental in changing conventions of photography, he gave no graces to his talents, nor did he consider himself an artist.

"I'm a miserable photographer," Snowdon recently told Der Spiegel ... "I think it's all absolute nonsense how people talk about photography as being an art," he insists. "It's a very menial career that you do if you draw badly. Now they teach it at the Royal College of Art and get grand about it. It's the only course there that I don't understand." (Filler, May/June 2001).

He enjoyed the technicalities of photography and modern developments, in both devices and manipulation methods, have made it easier for people to capture great images. In this sense, photography is not dead, but more alive than ever. People are freer to express themselves within it, which gives rise creativity as they strive to do so with originality.

However, there are photographers and critics who argue that these technologies, and the rise of social media sites like Facebook and Instagram, destroy the 'art' of photography. They claim that new technologies are common place and remove the necessity of acquiring the technical capabilities once required to take a great photo, and, that thorough numerous social media outlets we are saturated with images as people document and share 'every' moment of their lives. Whether the photograph is good or bad, whether the moment is banal or beautiful, is not important anymore, as the sheer quantity of images leads to audience desensitization.

"It's really weird," says Antonio Olmos. "Photography has never been so popular, but it's getting destroyed. There have never been so many photographs taken, but photography is dying." (Jeffries, 2013).

If photography is accepted as a form of self-expression, and technological advancements allow more people to express themselves through this means, how can it possibly be dying? It has certainly changed, yet its essence remains the same. The fact that there are millions more photographs to view doesn't take away from its capacity to be brilliant. The fact that there are millions of people taking photos does not stop visionary artists from arising to share their unique and poignant views of the world. Photographic artists like Henri Cartier-Bresson still walk amongst us, looking to capture those 'decisive moments' that define beautiful qualities of life that cannot be described in words.