

IMPACT OF PHOTOGRAPHY ON SOCIETY

OVERVIEW OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Writing with Light

- Photography or the act of “*writing with light*” has evolved tremendously through the 150+ years of its existence
- Used for numerous and varied purposes
 - Battles of war
 - Human’s first steps on the moon
 - Snap shots
 - Affixed in galleries ~ Steglitz
 - Affixed to refrigerators ~ Produced by Mom
 - Infrared images

IT TAKES MANY GUISES

- We have been trained in this last century to accept the photograph as a factual object
- Describing a realistic event
- 15,000 camera generated images daily
 - we view them & disregard them
- Photography has in fact played a pivotal role in shaping world events since 1840's
- Scientific breakthroughs could not transpire w/o the use of cameras
- Political structure

PHOTOGRAPHY AS A SCIENTIFIC TOOL

- Science – 1839 scientific breakthrough itself
- 1940 – Dr. Harold Edgerton began working with millisecond flash photography. It allowed him and other scientist to study the effects of object movement
- 1901 – Conrad Roentgen discovered X-rays
- Astronomy – assisted immeasurably through its alliance with photography. As early as 1877

Moon Landing

- By August 1967, Orbiter 4 & Orbiter 5 had photographed 99 percent of the 1,950 black & white pictures.
- These photos were generously provided to press
- Apollo 11 was launched in July 16, 1969
- Neil Armstrong & Edwin Aldrin took hundreds of shots during their 21 hour & 37 minute stay on the moon
- Most widely used photo shows the men gathering rock samples, the spacecraft etc..
- The most dramatic was Armstrong's own footprint.
- Without the caption people would never know the why the photo was important.
- "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind"



PHOTOGRAPHY AS A POLITICAL TOOL

- Sky was not only left for science, aerial photos and other types of photography are being used for espionage and political purposes
 - WW1 In 1916 cameras were used during flights over enemy territories to determine troop movements
- Matthew Brady's Photographic Corp. followed soldiers into the Civil War battle zones
 - In reading these papers and seeing the gruesome images that they stroked civilian fervors against the other side
- CARTI DE VISTI (TIN TYPE)
- John Heartfield's montages of Hitler and Mussolini during WWII published in popular European periodicals left no doubt that faction existed which questioned the motives and actions

Vietnam

- The brutality and futility of war in Vietnam were captured in a number of images.
- From self-immolation of Buddhist Monks to children fleeing a napalm attack to the last Americans boarding a helicopter on the roof of the US embassy in Saigon
- These images actually helped turn the American people against the war.
- Non-manipulated photographs were also published in order to rouse public sentiment happened in WWII

•1960 photographs of Vietnam conflict were published world wide
▪believed that the publication of the My Lai massacre prompted American public to pressure the government into ending its involvement



- 1968
- Eddie Adams
- Associated press
- Execution of a Vietcong prisoner by a South Vietnamese general
- 1969 Pulitzer Prize



Mogadishu

- Paul Watson
- Correspondent for the Toronto Star
- Mogadishu, Somalia
- Jeering Somali mob dragging the body of a dead American soldier down the street
- The battle is depicted in the film “Black Hawk Down” and the book by the same name.
- 1994 – Pulitzer Prize for spot news photography
- Words were not needed for this horrifying photo. It wasn't until readers read the typical caption “Humiliation in Somalia: The body of a U.S. serviceman is dragged through the streets of Mogadishu”



PHOTOGRAPHY AS A SOCIOLOGICAL & EMOTIONAL TOOL

- Provided an emotional impetus to alter social conditions has long been recognized
- 1851 engravings of the poor Englishmen Henry Mayhew pioneered social awareness through photographs, did little to change it yet started the movement in social photography
- Lewis W Hines while photographing Eastern immigrants entering the United States via Ellis Island in New York, he followed these immigrants into their tenement homes to photograph their living and working conditions, dramatic events eventually ensued, resulting in better conditions for his subjects, generations of working for the poor.
 - Directing his efforts towards the children of the immigrants he took many photographs of young people and their abysmal working conditions
 - In 1907 he was appointed as a reporter for the National Child Labor Committee
- W. Eugene Smith – 1971-1975: Series documenting emotive environmental photographs when he exposed the consequences of industrial pollution in Minamata, Japan. Enacting legislation to govern toxic waste
- Not all have a sense of history of emotional drama, William Henry Jackson – mid 1870's notable landscapes, created the National Parks System
 - WH Jackson photographer for a geological survey team to explore uncharted lands west of the Mississippi River. In a few years reached Grand Canyon & the Yellowstone River – US Congress funding for civilian expeditions & creation of the National Parkland System (Yellowstone National Park)

The Depression

- Photographers working for the Farm Security Administration took many well-known images of the Depression-era
- Trips were taken throughout the country documented how the “submerged third” of the population was coping with losing their jobs
- Roy Stryker
- Wanted to show the two thirds of Americans who were relatively prosperous, that some of their fellow citizens were living in desperate conditions.
- Haunting images captured the hard times that words were not necessary
- Dorothea Lange
- “Migrant Mother”



“Fleeing a Dust Storm in Cimarron County, Oklahoma, April 1936”

Arthur Rothstein

First photographer hired by Stryker

Traveled South & West

Came across the a man and his two sons trying to escape a dust storm



- Margaret Bourke-White
- One of the first photographers hired on staff of Life in 1936 and for her coverage of WWII, she started her career as an advertising and industrial photographer.
- Flood victims Louisville, Kentucky, 1937
- Words included
- The photo wasn't for life but for Erskine Caldwell, to prove that poverty and racism in his novel Tobacco Road really existed.
- After this photo she changes from advertising photographer to concentrate on photojournalism.



Two Deaths

- Associated Press photo
- HITLER KILLED IN BATTLE
- “As the report of Hitler’s death was received in the City”
- PRESIDENT SHOT DEAD, PRESIDENT DEAD
- Photo by Carl Mydans of Life magazine
- Commuters on a train in Stamford, Connecticut



Communism Meets Capitalism

- Fidel Castro, was aboard a Circle Line sightseeing boat
- Beth A. Kaiser
- Without a caption this would be a strong photo The Communist dictator near the symbol of Freedom, The Statue of Liberty.
- Advertising Campaign for Madam Tussaud's wax Museum



CONCLUSION

- Why are some photographs remembered when some are forgotten?
 - 3 Elements
 - Composition or aesthetic value
 - A statement or message
 - Historical or topical context
- *Photography is a visual medium. Aesthetics and composition are very important considerations. The statement or message while assisted by composition must be forceful enough to communicate the idea behind the photograph.*