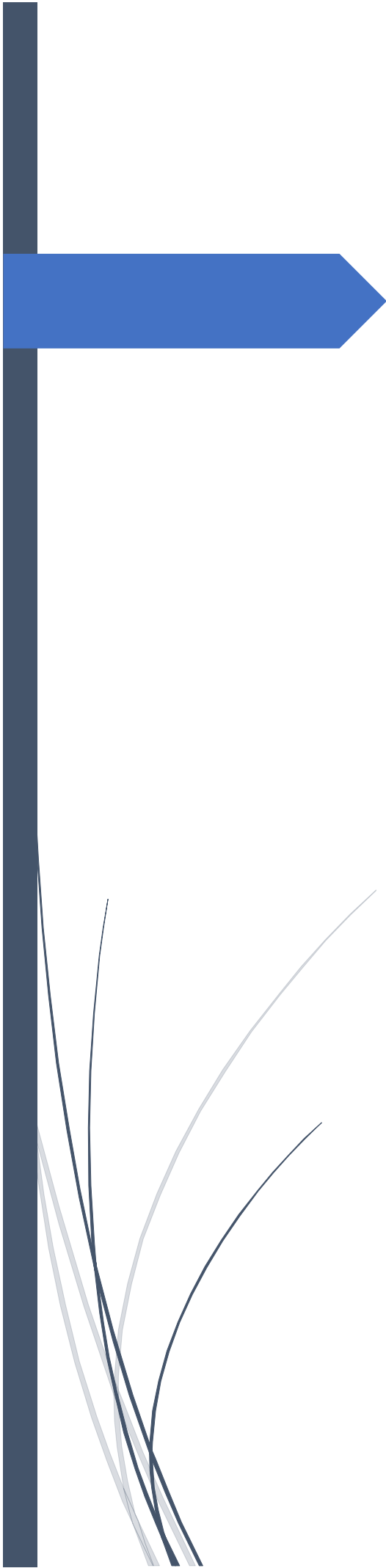




Research in Context (ADAD5003/C)

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Examining the Influence of Digital Technology on Image Making in the Context of Conflict, Environment, and Identity of the Flaneur

This essay will explore the impact of digital technology on image making within the realms of conflict, environmental issues, and the identity of the flaneur is a complex and evolving subject. In this essay we will investigate tools in shaping narratives documenting social upheavals and influencing the flaneur's perception of the contemporary world. By examining these interconnected themes, this essay will aim to unravel the complex relationships between technology and visual representation in today's dynamic urban landscape.

Digital technology has allowed photographers to express their talents using different mediums whether through art, photography, film, text or technical devices such as webcams, drones, CCTV and more. This allows the artists to connect in many ways with technology constantly developing there are evermore ways the Flaneurs can use different mediums to interpretate the world they explore. Now with AI being introduced, how will this impact the way artists explore the world around them?

The flaneur and digital technology has revolutionized image-making by providing artists with unprecedented access to diverse perspectives on themes like conflict, environment, and identity. They can navigate digital spaces allowing image makers to exceed physical barriers offering a global view on conflicts and environments also, digital platforms serve as a power medium for exploring and expressing complex identities prompting a more inclusive dialog through visual storytelling.

The questions addressed include the Flaneur's exploration of identity; social media photography projects image makers by choosing the flaneur approach to navigate a digital landscape by the capture and exploration diverse identities. By engaging with online communities, photographers can now document and celebrate the richness of individual and collective identities, showcasing a variety of cultural gender, and subcultural expressions.

Digital technology and the surveillance state street photography in smart cities. Flaneurs use digital technology to document the impact of surveillance in modern urban environments for example Singapore. Through street photography in smart cities, they can capture the subtle and overt surveillance mechanisms, prompting reflection on privacy, control and the implications of pervasive technology which shapes society. For this the artists document using CCTV cameras, facial recognition systems and other surveillance apparatuses creating a visual commentary on the implications of constant monitoring and its effects on privacy within public places (Muggah and Walton, 2021).

In addition, the impact of technological society through Augmented Reality (AR) installations as Flaneur artists employ installations to weave narratives about the intersection of humanity and technology. By overlaying digital elements onto physical spaces, these installations offer an immersive experience that prompts viewers to reconsider their relationship with the technological society. It becomes a dynamic, interactive commentary on how digital advancements shape our daily lives and societal structures.

Over the years Flaneurs have used many ways to capture the essences of the world around them and in the essence of Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin digital technology has influenced photography and image making over the years. Contemporary flaneurs often stroll through the streets and cities observing modern life, in contrast to artists who would have used paint to capture the moments. Today the flaneur often armed with a digital device capturing brief moments. Benjamin's notion of the "the optical unconscious" (Reinhardt, 2015) finds importance in digital photographs ability to document the unnoticed. Charles Baudelaire's concept of the flaneur as a detached observer (Licoppe, 2017) aligns with the digital photographer's capacity to maintain a certain distance while engaging with the surroundings. While Sophie Calle a contemporary artist symbolises the modern flaneur with her use of digital mediums. Calle's exploration of personal narratives and unhealthy tendencies aligns with the interactive and participating nature of digital image sharing. The evolution of digital technology has enabled a democracy of image making, thus, empowering individuals to become flaneurs, capturing and sharing their unique perspectives on the urban landscape.

Digital technology has significantly influenced the portrayal of identity in the image-making process of the flaneur. Unlike traditional photography digital equipment allows instant capture manipulation and distribution of images shaping the representation of the flaneurs' identity. Instant capture is also significant as digital cameras and smartphones allow the modern-day flaneur to instantly capture moments offering a real-time portrayal of their experiences. This immediately reflects the impulsiveness and characteristics in the flaneurs exploration of urban space capturing the essence of their identity in the moment. Selective self-presentation through social media platforms has provided a stage for the flaneur to curate and present their identity selectively. The digital image becomes a tool for the construction of a narrative about their urban experiences, interests, and aesthetic preferences, shaping how the photographer is perceived by others.

Digital manipulation through digital technology allows the flaneur to manipulate images, altering colours, composition and even reality itself. The manipulation can be a metaphor for the subject nature of identity, emphasizing the fluidity and constructed aspect of the flaneur's self-presentation. Through the online persona, the flaneur extends presence beyond physical urban space to online realms. This expansion of identity into the digital domain allows for a more complex and multifaceted representation as the flaneur engages with the global audience. Through narrative exploration digital storytelling platforms such as blogs and vlogs provide the flaneur with the means to weave a narrative around their urban wanderings, this narrative construction becomes an integral part of identity, influencing how the flaneur perceives themselves and how they are perceived by others. In essence, the influence of digital technology on image-making for the flaneur transforms the exploration of identity into a dynamic interactive, and technologically mediated process reflecting the evolving nature of self-presentation in the digital age.



Fig. 1 Kurdish Refugee drinking water

In Fig 1 the realm of conflict is documented by a digital flaneur Judah Passow, his work on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict stands out (Senfft, 2010). Passow through digital imaging transforms into a modern-day flaneur, capturing the nuances of conflict. In Passow's lens, this picturesque quality emerges not as an aesthetic ideal but as a stark portrayal of conflict's raw reality, amplified by the immediacy and accessibility afforded by digital technology. The Flaneur's role here is of selective observation which shapes the narrative through curated images that navigate the complex layers of the Israeli-Palestinian struggles in the digital age.

Digital technology has significantly impacted the representation of Judah Passow's work by providing a global platform for showcasing his art. Through online galleries, social media, and digital publications, Passow can reach a wider audience breaking geographical boundaries. The convenience of the internet allows for real-time delivery of his creation's encouragement and discussion (Welle, 2021). It is useful to compare by examining other Flaneur artists from the past such as Charles Baudelaire and contemporary artists influenced by the digital era like Banksy. Baudelaire's work was largely confined to the print medium during his time limiting its accessibility. In contrast Banksy leverages digital platforms like Instagram to share his politically charged street art globally. While Baudelaire's '*Flaneur*' was rooted in the 19th century urban life, Banksy's modern approach involves utilizing digital tools not only for distribution but also for creating interactive experiences. The public engagement with Banksy's work often involves online discussions, viral sharing and even amplified reality experiences. In awareness digital technology has transformed how artists like Judah Passow and Banksy are represented and perceived offering a dynamic canvas that extends beyond traditional boundaries influencing the way audiences interact with and interpret their work.

Flaneurs utilize digital imaging to document environmental issues and landscapes which often employ their skills to capture the intersection of human activities and nature. One notable artist exemplifying this approach is Edward Burtynsky. His photography focuses on industrial landscapes offering a critical lens on environmental impact development. Burtynsky's work such as the series



Fig 2 "Densified Oil Filters #1," Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, 1997.

"Manufactured Landscapes" Fig. 2 (Cammaer, 2009), employs large-scale digital imagery to showcase vast industrial scenes highlighting the consequences of resource extraction and consumption. Through intricate compositions and high-resolution images, he invites viewers to reflect on the environmental cost of modern lifestyles. Digital technology enables these artists to capture intricate details and presents the images with a level of clarity that prompts viewers to confront the environmental challenges depicted. The immediacy of digital imaging also allows for rapid dissemination of these visual narratives fostering a broader understanding of the ecological issues at hand. In the hands of flaneurs like Burtynsky digital imaging becomes a powerful tool for advocacy inviting viewers to reconsider their relationship with the environment. These artists act as contemporary observers using technology to document critique and inspire conversations about the evolving landscapes shaped by human influence.

Digital tools empower individuals to express and explore identity in multiple ways. The rapid nature of digital smartphones allows the modern Flaneur to capture moments in real time reflecting the impulsiveness and spontaneity inherent in their exploration of the urban space. This aligns with

Henri Cartier-Bresson's idea of "holding ones breath to capture a transient reality" as quoted by Bermann (2019). Selective self-presentation through social media platforms provides a stage for the flaneur to curate and present their identity selectively. Digital images become powerful tools for constructing narratives about urban experiences, interests and aesthetic preferences. This aligns with Cartier-Bresson's emphasis on capturing reality at the precise moment as flaneurs use digital images to freeze and share fleeting aspects of their persona. Digital manipulation further enhances the exploration of identity allowing the flaneur to alter colours, compositions and even reality itself. This manipulation serves as a metaphor for the fluid and constructed nature of the flaneurs self-presentation echoing Cartier-Bresson's joy in mastering an image (Scharf, 1998). The expansion of identity into the digital domain through online personas enables a more complex and multifaced representation. Flaneurs engage with a global audience transcending physical urban space. The digital landscape becomes a dynamic interactive platform for identity exploration, embracing the evolving nature of self-presentation in the digital age. In essence, digital image-making influenced by Cartier-Bresson's philosophy transforms the exploration of the identity for the flaneur into a dynamic, interactive and technologically mediated process. The immediacy, selectivity and manipulative capabilities of digital tools contribute to a richer and more nuanced representation of personal and cultural identity in today's digital landscape.

Digital tools empower individuals to express and explore identity in multilayered ways. Through graphic design, photography, and visual spaces, people can experiment with visual representations, embracing the fluidity of identity. Due to the technical advancements within digital cameras and mobile phones the user can seem to take what could be conceived as passive photography, with greater influence and decision making from the technology than the photographer themselves.

Digital technology's intersection with consideration in the digital era. broader societal themes, including surveillance, raises concerns about privacy and control. Artists like Edward Snowden Lyon, (2014) have visually depicted the implications of mass surveillance, emphasizing the need for awareness and the future may involve a delicate balance between technological advancement and safeguarding individual rights.

In the future of the digital image-making we may see a rise in immersive and interactive experiences blending augmented reality and artificial intelligence to communicate complex narratives relating to conflict, environment, and identity. Flaneur artists might explore new dimensions leveraging technologies like virtual reality to engage audiences in thought provoking visual journeys. Additionally, advancements in machine learning could lead to innovative tools for image creations allowing artists to experiment with novel styles and perspectives. The evolving relationship between technology and art may reshape the way we perceive and interpret these crucial aspects of human existence.

In conclusion this essay explored the intricate impact of the digital technology on image making particularly within conflict, environmental issues and the identity of the flaneur. Digital advancements have empowered flaneur artists to exceed physical barriers providing unprecedented access to diverse perspectives and shaping narratives in dynamic urban landscapes. This essay investigated the transformation of the identity through instant capture selective self-presentation, digital manipulation and narrative exploration in the realms of conflict. Digital flaneurs like Judah Passow utilize technology to selectively observe and curate images navigating the complex layers of the Israeli Palestinian struggles. The global reach of digital platforms has revolutionized how artists like Passow and Banksy are represented, breaking traditional boundaries and influencing audience engagement. Exploring the environment through the digital lens artists like Edward Burtynsky leverage digital imaging to document and critique the consequences of the human impact on nature.

Digital tools enable the rapid dissemination of visual narratives fostering a broader understanding of the ecological issues and therefore inspire conversations about the evolving landscapes. The age of digital technology transforms the exploration of the identity into a dynamic, interactive and technologically mediated process. Artists navigate digital realms using images as vessels for exploring identity and capturing the transient nature of personal and cultural narratives. The broader implications and future directions suggest a delicate balance between technological advancement and safeguarding individuals' privacy, particularly in the context of surveillance. Artist like Edward Snowden visually depicts the implications of mass surveillance emphasizing the need for awareness and considered responsibility in the digital era. Looking ahead the future of digital image making may witness a rise in immersive and interactive experiences blending augmented reality and artificial intelligence. Flaneur artists might explore new dimensions leveraging virtual reality to engage audiences in thought provoking visual journeys. Advancements in machine learning could introduce innovative tools for image creation reshaping the relationship between technology and art in the interpretation of conflict, environment and identity.

This essay has explored the profound impact of digital technology on image making particularly with the realms of conflict, environmental issues and complex identity of the flaneur. Unravelling the interconnected themes, it has highlighted how digital tools have revolutionized the way artists capture, manipulate and disseminate images transcending traditional boundaries. From the streets to online-platforms, contemporary flaneurs armed with digital devices have embraced a democratic era of image making empowered by the fluidity and immediacy of digital tools. This essay reinforced that digital technologies have transformed the exploration of identity, the documentation of societal issues and the interpretation of crucial aspects of human existence. The intricate impact of the digital advancements on image making calls for consideration the navigation of the evolving landscape of the digital era.

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