

How do cultural and societal contexts influence the representation of identity in photography, and what impact does this have on viewers' perceptions?

or

In what ways do photographs function as a form of social commentary, and how can their power to represent reality be both constructive and manipulative?

Mirzoeff, N. (1998) *The Visual Culture Reader*. London: Routledge.

SUMMARY

Visual Culture is a series of essays that tackle the concept of visual culture and how post-modernism, and modernism are intertwined with this concept. This references how the visual is a mechanism that requires studying, how in history the visual requires contemplation, depending on its surrounding: Race, Gender, or social contexts. Mirzoeff references in his essay how the rise of photography allowed visuals to be differentiated and as such become indistinguishable from reality. The visual and image could both be the representation of what it had captured, but from differing perspectives.

EVALUATION

Mirzoeff's research into the visual poses a significant question: how does one differentiate the visual culture from reality in an era where the visual has taken control of history. Whilst, allowing for reproductions and misrepresentations of history. The validity of his arguments however aligns with theorists of the time, such as John Berger and Susan Sontag he considers representation an ethical issue, however when reviewing his work, we must consider that he is a writer and not an artist so his views could be views as impartial to social narratives. Mirzoeff's research of the visual poses a significant question: how does one differentiate the visual culture from reality in an era where the visual has taken control of the narrative, allowing for reproductions and misrepresentations of history? Outer influences may control the visual surrounding as this is a representation of this period of time.

Individual who controls the camera leading to this idea of visual culture that Mirzoeff poses to be a key concept.

CONNECTION

Mirzoeffs arguments surrounding visual culture pose a significance, the arguments that I desire to explore in my dissertation as his arguments centred around the viewers perception and how visual culture influences it with outer influences at play also.

Sekula , A. (1978) *Dismantling modernism reinventing documentary 1978 (notes on the politics of representation).*

SUMMARY

Allan Sekula's essay surrounding modernism and reinventing the documentary once again comes from the specific viewpoint, Sekula views the modern era of photography as flawed, Sekula views the modernism era as a capitalists view on society and as such, they have the socio-economic power to dictate the narrative to a lower socio – economic group. Sekula references the concept when photography is referred to as 'fine art' it is subjective, but when you label photography a documentary, it leads the audience to collude certain 'mannerisms' and 'sensibility' to the risks taken as a photographer, it leads to Documentary 'transcending' a basic line of thought 'requires critique' as it creates its own narrative and perpetuates reality compared to that of other forms of photography.

EVALUATION

This source is from a similar time as my original source, but it demonstrates a change in through Sekula is an example of many theorists who began to see that representation was flawed, that photography was been dictated by socio-political contexts which meant the viewers perception were being shifted from reality itself. Sekula himself has a compelling argument when considering the idea of 'reinventing photography'

CONNECTION

Sekula's' work as a photographer and his idea of 'reinventing documentary' poses a key point my dissertation question itself as the idea of documentary photography is intertwined with representation as this is where the concept of misrepresentation centres from and where debates and questions in the modern era are raised as documentary photography indeed be a reflection of reality when you only see the context the Visual creator chooses you to see and in this sense, Sekula's work and challenges are once again a pivotal structure in my argument and arguably the argument by ll provide the foundations that are required for my opinion.

Scruton, R. (1981) *Roger Scruton, photography and representation, PhilPapers.*

Available at: <https://philpapers.org/rec/SCRPAR-2> (Accessed: 13 October 2024).

SUMMARY

The concept of this very book questions the idea whether photography can indeed represent anything, it follows the concept of comparing representation of art and photography, this essay demonstrates that we need to separate the identities of each art form primarily as representation is separate. For photography for instance there is a casual relation between what the lens captures and the representation itself as when we photograph something it has to relate to what it captures and despite what my perceptions might be the subject and it always refers to what it captured in that particular moment whereas the idea of a painting might be the subject and it always refers to what it captured in that specific moment, whereas the concept of a painting might be the subject. It always refers to what it captured in that moment, whereas the idea of a painting or an art representation can decay.

EVALUATION

This source argument separating the idea of representation in art and photography is weakened by the authors standpoint that he maintains throughout, as photography and art although separate identities, are both forms of art that can be influenced by the social commentary and constructs that surround them so to declare the photograph as the literal form of representation is incorrect as demonstrated through documentary photography in modern times and past.

CONNECTION

Scrutons argument stems from the idea that representation in fine art is often allowed to be interpreted whereas photography always consists of the literal; this can be shown to be an incorrect but almost biased interpretation that is shown to be wrong through artworks themselves. However, his argument aligns with my idea of how social commentary runs alongside how we interpret something and rather, Scruton's argument demonstrates how representations can be manipulated, as will be shown in artworks and images throughout my dissertation.

McCauley, A. (2007) 'The trouble with photography', in *Photography theory*. New york : Routledge , pp. 403–430.

SUMMARY

In this essay, McCauley explores the concept of why we the viewers, care about the 'photograph' about why there is such an "ontological condition to explore the photograph" compared to other arts she explored the idea that the photograph seems to have this 'aesthetic' that means we seek to explore in it compared to other art forms. She explores the concept on how the photography can be defined and the flaws in how theorists consider representation and this idea of the 'democratic photograph' that plagues the very concept of photography itself inferring that photography is the 'reproducible' mundane art form that is simply to act as aesthetic propaganda for the masses, as McCauley states, it is yet to be proven that there is a connection with how a photograph can 'fragments oneself' when viewing it regardless of the context.

EVALUATION

This source first provides a modern outlook on the stance of theory in photography. She has another outlook on photography as a medium compared to other theorists and reflects on these while building her essay; the concepts she follows are proven and can be evaluated as accurate in 2024, has another outlook on photography as a medium compared to other theorists and reflects on these while building her essay; the concepts she follows are proven and can be evaluated as accurate in 2024 almost ten years after this essay was published.

CONNECTION

When considering my dissertation question and the elements within, considering the manipulative and constructive natures of my question, McCauleys arguments that are stated, have clear, connection, and leave room for me to implement my idea of social commentary and photography and question whether societal contexts really pose a risk to how photography is interpreted.