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From the Lens-Based Image Making research strand lectures, choose a theme, movement, or selection of artists that relate to your practice or interests, and construct a 2,500-word essay. Critically assess primary themes, key writers, and relevant practitioners.

This essay will be discussing why do people photograph, and in particular why the chosen scenes that they photograph. Images provide an audience the insight into our individual perceptions of an experience. Artists choose to photograph certain ‘moments’ in time, exploring the everyday life and all that lies in between. It is understood that photography captures these ‘moments’ in order to document a visual memory. *Does the captured ‘moment’ in question, hold more weight and meaning when the photograph goes through consideration before it is taken?* (why is that chosen moment, the moment that is captured?) Photography is rarely experienced the same way and an image is often telling the tales of more than one. To each individual an image and how it is received can be fuelled by memory and particular feelings from the time it was recorded.

Firstly, to better understand why an exact image is taken, we try to understand the goal and reasoning for taking it. To discuss whether the personal and relational connections to a photograph are important, rather than simply the documentation of a moment in time. Psychogeography is what describes the interpersonal connections people have with a location (Tate, 2017). This explores the emotional and physical experience associated with a time and a place.

Images are produced in a variety of ways and attempt to portray a personal response. Guy Debord was a French critic and theorist, whom believed that there is a level of control through the media, the intention for a 'self-fulfilling' society, of which is dictated by the visual advertisements, over consumption of popular culture and mass media . Debord spoke frequently on the psychological effects of the urban environment and expressing how psychogeography is not limited to what we feel in relation to a space, but it can be a form of defiance and a political statement, particularly towards the capitalist system.

The more he identifies with the dominant images of need, the less he understands his own life and his own desires. The spectacle's estrangement from the acting subject is expressed by the fact that the individual's gestures are no longer his own; they are the gestures of someone else who represents them to him. - Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*

(Goodreads.com, 2023)

Debord's maps are a great example of having an intention for an image. This image discussed and represents how we may 'internally' perceive a location and distance. It depicts how we may interpret the distance between each location through the separation of the city, with the red arrows representing the highest areas of footfall between the 'urban archipelago's islands'. Paris has been fragmented, reflecting only the emotional ties to individual neighbourhoods.

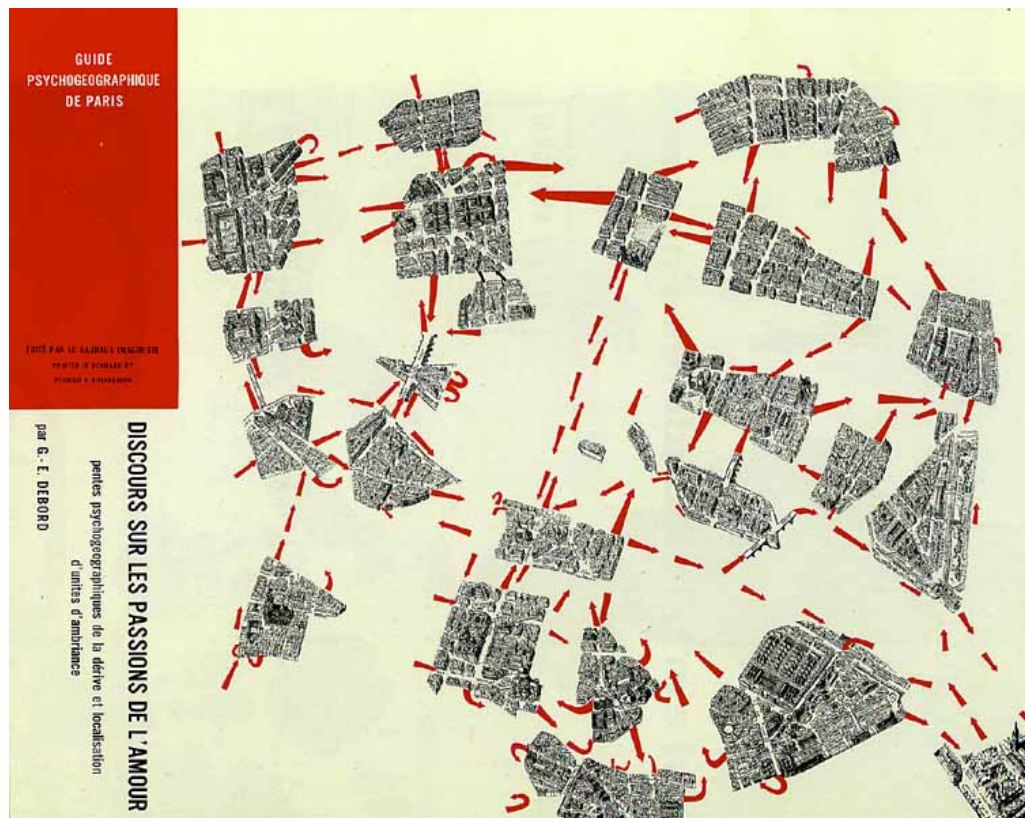


Figure 1 Guy Debord, 1955, *Psychogeographic guide of Paris*

Debord was a situationist and created these maps as a critique of modernist urbanism, ‘an immense accumulation of spectacles’ (Marxists.org, 2023). Modernist urbanism being based on the ideologies of the modernist era (post world war), the belief that the world had to be ‘fundamentally rethought’ (Victoria and Albert Museum, 2017). This meant that, as a result, the cities and societies were perceived as becoming inhumane and isolating. The idea that everyday existence has to be systematic, compartmentalised and controlled (Siu and Huang, 2015). Consequently, Debord curated this map out of cartographical imagery and photographic techniques, meaning he based his psycho-

geographical piece on the notion that subconscious may be depicted in ways that successfully convey the represented spatial information (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023).

Alternatively, the French photographer, Henri Cartier-Bresson coined the term, “The Decisive Moment”, which describes the fundamental observations that he made on photography. Cartier-Bresson’s book based upon his studies and processes, ‘The Decisive Moment’ in 1952 which was originally published in French, and titled, ‘Images à la Sauvette’, literally translates to, ‘Images on the Run’ (Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, 2017). The ‘decisive moment’, describes the beauty of taking images in a world that is dynamic and always in motion. It is about timing, vantage point and composition, and that when all these components align, they capture an engaging image (Author, 2022). It is understood, through Cartier-Bresson’s ideology, this is not something that can be planned nor forced.

Composition must be one of our constant preoccupations, but at the moment of shooting it can stem only from our intuition, for we are out to capture the fugitive moment, and all the interrelationships involved are on the move.

-Henri Cartier-Bresson

(Photoquotes.com, 2023)



Figure 2 Henri Cartier-Bresson, *SPAIN, Andalucia, Seville.*(1933)

Cartier-Bresson's work directly avoids any particular plan or intention, he captures candid street photography. He was heavily influenced by the concepts from the surrealist movement. One in particular, is their concept known as, 'the objective chance' (Pieter Paul Hensels, 2018). This is usually when something extraordinary is encountered between components defining a sudden realisation of the incomprehensible forces that sometimes reveal themselves in life. In this instance, it is an unexpected moment of perfect timing, creating an almost perfect compositional image (Daly, 2015). For example, *Andalucia, Seville, 1933* (Figure 2) has a permeating energy, describing a gathering of young children amid juxtaposing perspectives of the world. The children as the vibrancy amongst the collapsing walls and ruins.

Cartier-Bresson, does not necessarily go out with great intentions or strong meaning behind his imagery, other than in searching for these curious encounters. This is a true exploration and display of interactions with the mundane and every day. He followed his intuition when taking pictures and the reasoning for doing so, was simply to capture the unanticipated. Evidently, creating a collection of interesting and pleasing to the eye photography. He formed ambiance in imagery through drifting throughout the urban environment, most commonly Paris.

Similarly, Robert Doisneau captured the everyday, images taken by the casual viewer. He was an observer, you could say.

Figure 3 Robert Doisneau, Bathers on the Marne (1944)



Doisneau was a French Photojournalist who used a variety of techniques, using the streets of Paris as his 'studio'. Doisneau, like Cartier-Bresson worked on catching these 'fleeting moments' in time (Icon Photography School, 2015). There is an intrigue in the idea of the Flâneur; an artist with no destination in view (Tate, 2017). An aspect of happenings and intention without a directive, a wanderer. Doisneau surmised that, 'the marvels of daily life are exciting; no movie director can arrange the unexpected that you find in the street.' (Flaneurphotographic.co.uk, 2022), making his practice appear as an adventurous and holistic endeavour. *Brothers In The Marne, 1944* (figure 3) has a humanistic quality, elements of humour and a focus on the composition of the black and white image. The picture is still one to admire, despite its lack of context nor our own knowledge of the events happening. It is difficult to consider whether more context would add to the work, rather than the personal interest of the photographer and the viewers consideration, presuming that, 'Art by nature is self-explanatory' (Adams, R., 1994, p31).

photographers are like other artists too, and being reticent because they're afraid that self-analysis will get in the way of making more art. They never fully know how they got the good pictures there that they have, but they suspect that a certain innocence may have been necessary. The poet X. J. Kennedy speaks of this in his amusing versus "Ars Poetica".

*The goose that laid the golden egg
Died looking up its crotch
To find out how its sphincter worked.
Would you lay well? Don't watch.*

The main reason that artists don't willingly describe or explain what they produce is, however, that the minute they do so they've admitted failure. Words are proof that the vision they had is not, in the opinion of some at least, fully there in the picture. Characterizing in words what they thought they'd shown is an acknowledgement that the photograph is unclear – that it is not art.

- Adams, R. ,1994,p33

In contrast, the Dadaist movement frequently paired work alongside or even integrated words into their imagery to develop context and relevance further, with poetry being a substantial influence and counterpart (Tate, 2017).

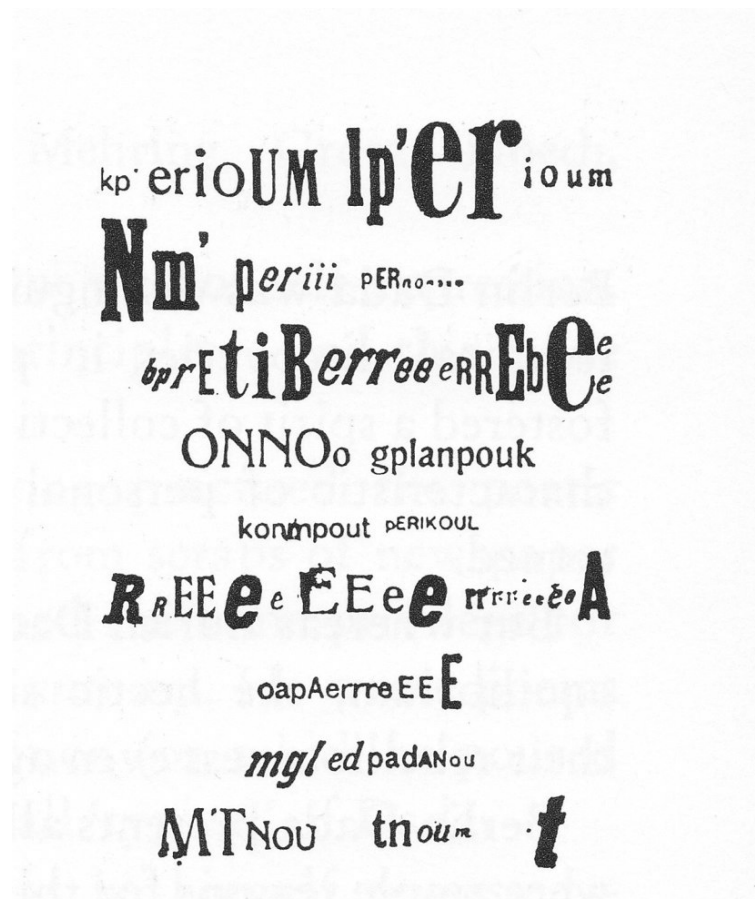


Figure 4, , Raoul Hausmann, 'optophonetic Poem', 1918

Raoul Hausmann was one of the founders of the Berlin Dada movement, being one of the main photographers to credit for the introduction of

photomontage. He frequently experimented with sound poetry and phonetic writing. *'Optophenetic Poem'*, 1918 (Figure 4) was an action for creating 'confrontation anti-art' in response to the devastation of the first world war (The Urban Wanderer, 2020), resulting in a concrete poem, where both logic and sense are absent, it's focus was not on literal meaning. It is a mockery of the nationalism and its attitudes, of which a large percentage of people believed is what had influenced, and subsequently lead to the war (The Art Story, 2016). The reasoning for the production of this type of imagery, was a statement. It developed to challenge society and cause an outrage for the bloodshed that could not be undone. It is the intention of this type of imagery that is led by intuition, but is not dependent on chance and opportunity.



Figure 5 Hannah Höch, *Cut with the Dada Kitchen Knife through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany*, 1919

Furthermore, the dada movement is an appropriate way in which imagery and photography, illustrates the idea of capturing a moment in time. 'A moment' that reflects a period in history that is somewhat still relevant to this day. Similarly to Raoul Hausmann, Hannah Höch's photomontage (figure 5) was created by selectively picking imagery that represents both the political contentions between the leading politicians during the 1919-20 period, as well as, imagery that insinuated the limitations and misogyny she experienced amongst her colleagues (Gotthardt, 2019).

I shoot because I see. I shoot because if I don't, I don't know who will.
Activism is seen as a dirty word. I shoot because I find peace in being
especially active, and being a vigorous advocate for a cause.

- R. Royce, 2017

It is understood that photographers, often capture an image purely to offer insight and action for change, whether it is activism or protest, in many ways it is all a form of photojournalism. The context of an image is important, dependent on the subject matter. For example, the philosophies behind both Cartier- Bresson and Robert Doisneau are paramount to understanding their work, and often makes the photography more interesting. However, it does not solely rely on this. These practitioners, do not need to elaborate on an individual piece as they often speak for themselves. Through emotion and composition, they have skilfully assembled a portfolio, that freely allows the viewer to interpret their work as they please. These often have a focal point that draws the eye in, pulling the audience to inspect and therefore creating a connection.

The subject matter does not require much consideration, as it is often a 'moment' that cannot be explained nor recreated.

Alternatively, but in many ways adjacent to, psychogeography and photomontage, are largely about the subject matter and theory. Instead of the focus on composition and personal attitudes towards photography, they explore more political and philosophical routes. These works, require an element of context to be understood and hold significance. In addition, a key component is consideration. The imagery produced by Guy Debord, for example, took a thought process to lead to the final product, rather than an impulsive and opportunistic approach.

To conclude, it is understood that photography captures an event in order to document a visual memory or representation. Thus, the captured 'moment' in question, is not any less worthy of being commended, dependent on whether an image requires further understanding to appreciate. Relatively, an image relies on the execution and result, allowing the process to speak for itself.

Figures

1 – Paris: (2023). *MACBA Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona*. [online] MACBA Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona. Available at: <https://www.macba.cat/en/art-artists/artists/debord-guy/guide-psychogeographique-paris-discours-sur-passions-lamour-pentes> [Accessed 31 Mar. 2023].

2 – Magnum Photos. (2020). *The World of Henri Cartier-Bresson • Magnum Photos Magnum Photos*. [online] Available at: <https://www.magnumphotos.com/newsroom/society/henri-cartier-bresson-the-world-of-henri-cartier-bresson/> [Accessed 22 Mar. 2023].

3 – Robert-foisneau.com. (2014). *Atelier Robert Doisneau | Robert Doisneau's photo archives. - Holidays*. [online] Available at: <https://www.robert-foisneau.com/en/portfolios/1953,vacances.htm> [Accessed 31 Mar. 2023].

4 – The Urban Wanderer. (2020). *Raoul Hausmann – The Urban Wanderer*. [online] Available at: <https://uncannycities.wordpress.com/tag/raoul-hausmann/> [Accessed 31 Mar. 2023].

5 – Gotthardt, A. (2019). *Hannah Höch on How to Be an Artist | Artsy*. [online] Artsy. Available at: <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-hannah-hoch-artist> [Accessed 31 Mar. 2023].

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