
Senior Projects Spring 2024

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Ice Cream Social

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Ice Cream Social

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of the Arts
of Bard College

by
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

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Ice Cream Social

Collecting objects has always been a large part of my practice. The things I have accumulated have a history of touch: from the previous owner(s) and the touch of my own. I hold personal memories and relationships with the objects, and also acknowledge that there has been someone before me who has done the same. In this way, the object serves as a vessel of association. It possesses different relationships with each person or object they interact with.

Throughout my collection of two dimensional objects, I have gathered an extensive amount of old photographs. For the photographer and the people in the photo, it served as a memory, but for me it serves as an object of indecipherability; the only legible aspects are its formal elements.

The photograph then, stands not as the real, but as a concept of the real. The photographer's own gaze is reflected in the image. A photograph from the past clearly expresses this obstructed relationship which the contemporary viewer experiences. Yet in today's image culture, this dissociation between the viewer and the photographic image is recklessly disregarded. We accept the images as truth.

In a time period where we privilege images over the physical world, I choose to work with and against an aesthetic consumerism of images that serve as a vehicle for communication. The photograph has largely become an extension of the human. It stands between us and lived experience. As this interplay grows with technological progression, the photograph becomes acutely embedded in everyday life. The documentary nature of the photograph implies that moments become captured in time and through this, a new form of communication is fostered. With an exponential use of images as communication, an expanding network of images serves as a universal data bank for experience and memory. This phenomena creates a shared memory and a shared truth that renders the photo more true than a written or spoken recollection. The growing anxiety of this trend is omnipresent in our day to day lives. It highlights the importance of relationships that exist outside these networks and a resurgence of value placed on personal truths.

Our gaze onto others is a conception of who we think they are. As they perform for us, we perform for them. We are left with a perception of their projection rather than truth. Contrary to Sartre's waiter who acts in bad faith by not being authentic, the clown works as a character or mask that allows one to explore their free will through play and with a negation of consequence due to the role the clown occupies. A visual confrontation of the clown's appearance creates ambiguity between joke and seriousness; the gaze of the viewer is subverted.

If a photograph is a concept of the world, then a picture of a clown delegitimizes the concept for the viewer by not allowing the subject's true intentions to be perceived. What remains is documentation of the unknown: something that can not be accessed through the photo. It is the sabotage of the clown that forces the viewer back into the real. Images lose their power and the need to form personal truths is reinstated.