1 Jeff Wall, *Shapes on a Tree*, 1998. Silver gelatin contact print, 24.4 × 19.4 cm. Photo: © Jeff Wall.

INTRODUCTION: PHOTOGRAPHY AFTER CONCEPTUAL ART

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This special issue of *Art History* aims to open up a debate about what is at stake in contemporary photographic art. It forms part of a large AHRC funded research project, 'Aesthetics after Photography', which focuses on the challenges that recent art photography poses for aesthetic theory. A collaborative and cross-disciplinary endeavour, the research project is directed by Margaret Iversen of the Department of Art History and Theory at the University of Essex and Diarmuid Costello of the Philosophy Department, University of Warwick. They have also guest edited this volume. The papers' original incarnation was as a two-day session at the annual Association of Art Historians conference held at Tate Britain, London, in 2008. We called for papers that addressed substantive theoretical or aesthetic issues raised by photography of the post-1960s period as an artistic medium, particularly in light of the oft-heard claim that the arts now inhabit a 'post-medium' condition. Our goal was to explore the remarkable shifts in the dominant forms of photography as a mainstream contemporary art, as opposed to a specialist domain, notably the significance of its apparent transformation from anti-aesthetic to aesthetic medium of choice. This can be seen in the way in which the a- or non-aesthetic uses of photography associated with various conceptual, proto-conceptual and post-conceptual practices of the 1960s and 1970s, and their documentation, gave way in the 1980s to the self-consciously 'anti-aesthetic' practices of postmodern appropriation, only to be overtaken in turn by the large-scale, pictorial and frequently digital, colour photography that has dominated photographic art since the 1990s. This last is a form of photography that is often compared to painting in the range of aesthetic effects to which it aspires. Certainly, it has been welcomed by museums, galleries, and the market in these terms.

One way we approached our theme was by taking up Jeff Wall's claim that recent photography represents a turn away from conceptual art – 'the last moment of the pre-history of photography as art' – and exploring its implications. One critical question this raised is whether the majority of recent photographic art is merely 'after' conceptual art in a weak historical sense, or whether it is truly *post*-conceptual in the more substantive sense of not merely coming after, but also internalizing and building upon the lessons of conceptual art. In practice, this has meant dealing with the way photography was conceived within the original conceptual and proto-conceptual practices of, say, Ed Ruscha, Bernd and Hilla

Becher, Douglas Huebler and Mel Bochner, on the one hand, and the pictorial photography of, say, Jeff Wall, Thomas Demand, and Andreas Gursky, on the other. There is still a temptation to see the early book works of Ruscha and the industrial archaeology of the Bechers, in particular, as establishing the conceptual, pictorial, and aesthetic ground upon and from which ambitious photographic art has since developed or diverged. Broadening the scope to consider less often examined exponents of photography within conceptual art complicates this picture. Moreover, some contemporary artists' work can be seen to combine 'pictorial' and 'conceptual' elements: Roni Horn's colour photographic books, for example, fall into this hybrid category. In any case, it was our hunch from the beginning that several of the critical divisions that structure writing on this body of work − between conceptual and pictorial, the aesthetic and the anti-aesthetic, etc. − are frequently over-determined and exaggerated. In their different ways, the papers collected here explore this hybrid condition.

Given the importance of Ruscha's books for the subsequent history of photography as art, it is not surprising that there are two papers on the subject that intersect in interesting ways. In her paper, 'Auto-maticity: Ruscha and Performative Photography', Margaret Iversen argues that the titles of Ruscha's books provide a verbal 'score' to be filled out by specific photographic realizations or performances. His practice is thus tied to a legacy of Duchamp that stems particularly from his instruction-framed piece, *Three Standard Stoppages*. Referring to his groundbreaking 1963 book, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, Ruscha explained that the title was formulated in advance of taking the photographs; in other words, it provided the nub of an instruction which he then duly carried out along Route 66. This suggests that Ruscha was engaged in a very specific kind of artistic activity − that is, following a predetermined route in his car and systematically recording just the gas stations. This pervasive auto-maticity (instruction, car, route, camera) is what makes the books perplexing and different from other photography books such as Robert Frank's *The Americans*. Iversen aims this argument against that offered by Jeff Wall in his essay on conceptual photography, 'Marks of Indifference' − an essay that is frequently cited in this volume. Wall positions the work of Ruscha and other artists of the period in relation to 'non-autonomous', that is, photojournalistic or amateur photography which, Iversen contends, fails to capture his deliberately affectless, depersonalized, repetitious, deadpan use of the camera. By conceiving of the books as instructional performance pieces, Iversen brings out the open-ended, experimental character of other works such as *Thirtyfour Parking Lots* or *Royal Road Test* (both from 1967), where an instruction is performed 'blindly' in order to see what will happen.

Aron Vinegar's paper is also concerned with Ruscha's photography. In 'Ed Ruscha, Heidegger, and Deadpan Photography', Vinegar connects the frequent use of the term 'deadpan' to describe Ruscha's work with Stanley Cavell's remarks on Buster Keaton's face and Martin Heidegger's notions of mood and attunement. Benjamin Buchloh's influential essay, 'Conceptual Art 1962−69: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions', consolidated the characterization of Ruscha as deadpan, by claiming that Ruscha's photographic practice emerged from Duchamp's and Cage's legacy of an 'aesthetic of indifference', and that his deadpan approach to photography was characterized by the acceptance of a 'universally valid facticity'. However, as Vinegar demonstrates,

this vocabulary of 'indifference', 'facticity', and the 'deadpan' has never been explicitly tied back to its rich vein of philosophical sources. His paper sets out to do just this by exploring issues of 'indifference', 'equanimity', and 'facticity' set out in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. He also shows how these notions intersect with Stanley Cavell's intriguing comments on Buster Keaton's 'stone face' – his characteristic expression of equanimity when confronted by whatever the world might throw at him. On this reading, deadpan emerges as not so much a mode of rhetorical delivery – and certainly not as ironic – but rather as the sign of a much deeper receptiveness to the world that is perhaps best understood in the light of Heidegger's notion of *Stimmung*, those fundamental moods or attunements characteristic of *Dasein*'s way of being in, and openness towards, the world in which it finds itself. So construed, deadpan is an even-tempered and resolutely non-judgemental receptiveness to the world – hence the 'Every' in *Every Building on Sunset Strip*.

Coming from quite different directions, then, Iversen's and Vinegar's papers on Ruscha nonetheless converge around the ideas of receptivity and openness and their aesthetic significance. Read together they implicitly point towards deeper aesthetic questions about the embodiment of reflective judgement (in the Kantian sense of that term) in art. Given the themes of Vinegar's paper, it is notable that Heidegger glosses the notion of 'disinterestedness' fundamental to Kant's theory of aesthetic judgement in terms of the 'unconstrained favouring' and 'free granting' of what appears. Such considerations clearly cut against the a- or non-aesthetic ways in which ideas such as the deadpan have typically been conceived in art history and criticism since the late 1960s.

Sarah James's paper, 'Subject, Object, Mimesis: The Aesthetic World of the Bechers' Photography', considers the equally influential practice of Bernd and Hilla Becher, regarded by many critics as another foundation stone of photographic art since the 1960s. Taking issue, similarly, with anti-aesthetic portrayals of their work and its underlying motivation, James employs Theodor Adorno's culturally and historically contemporaneous notion of 'mimesis' to foreground the mimetic relation to the world at the core of the Bechers' project – its relentless attempt to embody concretely a form of subjectivity adequate to its objects, and in so doing 'redeem expression' – which she understands in an Adornian light as a somatic responsiveness to the world prior to discursive thought. Examining the recent views of Blake Stimson and Michael Fried on the subjective and objective aspects of the Bechers' photography, she offers an over-arching view that would make sense of them both, implying that in so far as the two critical readings she canvasses only capture one side of the relation their work foregrounds, both remain incomplete when taken on their own. To this end, she argues that Adorno's aesthetic thought, notably his central and multivalent category of mimesis, offers a way in which to frame the relation of the subject and the object figured by the Bechers' photography, and in doing so to situate it within the context of a particular moment in German history. In this way, the Bechers' rejection of subjectivity and their pursuit of an objective photography are contextualized in relation to the 'post-Auschwitz taboo on beauty', and the ideology of anti-ideology that dominated West German cultural politics of the 1950s. Hence, despite the obvious differences between the context and meaning of the Bechers' use of photography and Ruscha's, here, too, an ethics of receptivity and openness to the world and the objects within it is evidently in play.

Moving on from these influential proto-conceptual practices, the next pair of papers looks closely at individual projects in the less widely examined practices of Douglas Huebler and Mel Bochner. Gordon Hughes's paper focuses on the shift from Huebler's early systems-based photographic work to his later use of photographic portraiture as a means to undercut the very systems that apparently govern his practice. To this end, he shows how the work reveals its anti-systematic nature by flouting its self-imposed constraints: Huebler includes a number of 'tells' to alert his viewers to the fact that the official claims for his practice are not to be taken at face value. As an example of this strategy, Hughes pays particular attention to Huebler's *Variable Piece #105, London, 1972*. This purports to pair photographs of eighteen mannequins taken at two-minute intervals on Oxford Street in London, with a photograph of the next passerby of the same sex as the mannequin that Huebler encountered. In Hughes' account, this piece is a key example of Huebler's attempts simultaneously to negate both the text-based systems that appear to structure a number of systems-based photographic practices, including his own, and the egregious expressivity of contemporaneous New York school photographers. This is why Huebler employs photographic *portraiture* in the context of his ostentatiously leaky systems. The fact that Huebler contravenes his own constraints to pair mannequins with look-alikes negates the former, while the use of look-alikes itself raises the spectre, but only the spectre, of the surrealists' use of doubles to tap into the Marvellous. Huebler's work consistently drains such motifs of their once uncanny affects, which, Hughes argues, should be seen as a riposte to the use of such motifs by various New York school photographers, including Diane Arbus and Helen Levitt, in their attempt to reinvigorate the expressivity of photographic portraiture.

Luke Skrebowski's essay, 'Productive Misunderstandings: Interpreting Mel Bochner's Theory of Photography', also focuses primarily on a single photographic work by a conceptual artist: Bochner's self-reflexive examination of photography in *Misunderstandings (A Theory of Photography)* (1967–70), a series of photographs on index cards of hand-written fallacies about the nature of photography. Like several other contributors to this volume, Skrebowski takes aim at Wall's partisan history of photo-conceptualism, particularly his use of this history to legitimate a practice of photographic tableaux, the terms of which his own practice may then be seen to fulfil. Despite appearing to fulfil Duchamp's hope that photography would render painting 'despicable', the most prominent outcome of photography's success turns out to be, ironically, the emergence of photography as a bona fide mainstream fine art medium through which to reinvigorate the Western tradition of picture-making. Skrebowski understands the implications of Bochner's work to be a thoroughgoing critique of such picture-making *avant la lettre*, which he argues is premised on a partial and highly motivated reading of conceptual art's 'failure' to undermine the ability of canonical artistic media to function as ontological guarantors of their works' existence as art. By re-conceiving photography as information, Skrebowski argues, Bochner sought to undermine or at least place *en abyme*, by means of a complex sequence of iterations, inversions, and partial fabrications, the iconic indexicality widely taken to be photography's irreducible, medium-specific characteristic. That is, the apparent necessity that photographs are always, and only, depictions of whatever was before the camera at the moment of exposure, and as such occupies the correct causal relation to the resulting image.

Moreover, much like Hughes's reading of *Variable Piece #105, London, 1972*, Skrebowski's account of Bochner's *Misunderstandings* includes a number of 'tells'. These include Bochner's admission that the series contains a number of invented fallacies and a lone picture card that seems to show an impossible image, a negative of a Polaroid, a negative-less positive process. Such clues, particularly the latter, caution us against taking what the work appears to document at face value, and in doing so reveal Bochner's theoretical hand. Taken together with his photographic work more generally, *Misunderstandings* thus functions as a self-reflexive interrogation of photographic ontology that refuses to reduce photography to its depictive function. As such, Bochner's photography constitutes both a neglected moment in photo-conceptualism, and an anticipation of more recent, post-digital worries about the ontology of the photographic image.

One of several obvious tensions that animate the papers in this volume can be highlighted by the juxtaposition of Skrebowski's defence of the aims of a radical conceptual critique of the aesthetic and Mark Godfrey's close reading of Roni's Horn's series of photographic books which she has been publishing since 1990. The photographs in *To Place* (1990–2006) document particular geographic, architectural, and cultural features of Iceland's landscape, while suggesting a range of possible relationships between photography, drawing and object making, as well as between various photographic genres. In his essay, 'Roni Horn's Icelandic Encyclopedia', Godfrey contextualizes this project in relation to the history of post-conceptual photographic practices and artists' books, arguing that Horn uses the form of the archive and encyclopedia to undo rather than cement categories and definitions. In this respect at least, her project resembles Huebler's systematic undoing of systems.

Iceland has a paradoxical attraction for Horn: it is a place of Deleuzian 'becoming', whose geological identity is mutable, while at the same time, it is a landscape which allows her to feel centred. These two meanings are communicated through the ways in which the photographs are presented to the viewer/reader of the books that make up *To Place*. The books and the photographs within them suggest the paradoxical possibility of a kind of identity as a perpetual state of becoming firmly rooted in and by the world. This is perhaps best realized in the sixth volume of *To Place, Haraldsdóttir* (1996) which consists of series of photographs of Margrét, a young woman that Horn photographed immersed up to her neck in pools of water. The changing light, weather, and water temperature are reflected in the close-up portraits – explaining the name of the installation version of the series, *You are the Weather*. In this piece, portraiture is captured in the process of becoming landscape. In sum, Horn uses various aspects of post-conceptual photography (seriality, archiving, text/image relationships, the book form) to quite different ends to those of either Bochner *or* Wall. Since her work is neither a critique of pictorial aesthetics, à la Bochner, nor straightforwardly an extension of the pictorial tradition, à la Wall, it effectively problematizes some of the oppositions that structure the field this volume addresses.

The final three papers in the volume focus on more obviously pictorial photography. In her paper, 'Thomas Demand, Jeff Wall and Sherrie Levine: Deforming ''Pictures''', Tamara Trodd focuses on photography's absorption of other media. Taking inspiration, like Godfrey, from Deleuze – in this case, the notion of the 'body without organs' – Trodd understands the recent return to pictorial photography by way of an analogy with the body. If composition can be

understood metaphorically in bodily terms, then Wall's compositions may be seen as deformed and twisted bodies, since his photographs are often made up of the disjointed remnants of past pictures that his work cannibalizes. This reading is clearly aimed against both Wall's claims for his own work and the use to which Fried has put them to claim his work for a revitalized modernist aesthetics of the picture. Trodd characterizes this 'force' of pictorial deformation she takes to be operative in both Wall and Demand, and the reanimation of dead pictorial remnants on which it turns in Wall, as 'uncanny'. This serves to pitch her account directly, if unintentionally, against Hughes' call for a moratorium on the use of this term in critical writing on photography. One obvious test of who is right here will turn on whether Trodd's reading of Wall and Demand manages to imbue this notion with critical life and productivity once more.

Fried is similarly the target of Trodd's reading of Demand, whose work she characterizes – against Fried's interpretation of it as allegory of 'intendedness as such' – as 'visceral'. Trodd understands Demand's pictures, with their painstakingly crafted but lifeless cardboard structures, not merely in terms of a sealed space interior to the photograph, but in terms of the *body*'s visceral interior, which extends, in Demand's exhibition designs, to the entire space of the gallery, and the relation between different works within his oeuvre. On Trodd's reading, this culminates in an account of how Demand's photography is 'propped', intermedially, on the body of sculpture ingested by photography. Photography, so construed, is a 'body without organs' – that is, without internal, self-supporting, organization – in so far as it is internally dependent on something external, namely, sculpture. The partial analogy with Wall is that Demand's photographs feed off the body of sculpture in ways reminiscent of Wall's relation to the corpus of past painting. What is 'uncanny' in all this, according to Trodd, is that it serves to reanimate the remnants of the medium upon which Demand's photography feeds, rather than creating a new medium in pictorial photography. In this respect, Trodd sees Demand as much as an inheritor of Sherrie Levine's strategies of appropriation as of Wall's relation to other media. On the resulting account, neither Wall nor Demand can be used to support the terms of a reinvigorated modernist aesthetics.

Not surprisingly, given our starting point, and the immense influence of his work and criticism on recent debates about photography, the final two papers engage directly with the work of Jeff Wall. Wolfgang Brückle's paper asks why Wall is held in such high esteem by art historians, having been championed early on by T. J. Clark and Thomas Crow in response to Wall's claim to fulfil Baudelaire's call for a 'painting of modern life', albeit in photographic form, and more recently by Michael Fried, who has picked up on Wall's penchant for self-consciously absorptive tableaux. In 'Almost Merovingian: On Jeff Wall's Relation to Nearly Everything', Brückle argues that such esteem is partly a result of the way in which Wall's writing self-consciously positions his own work in relation to both art history in general, and the theories of specific art historians in particular, and partly a result of the way in which his work self-consciously integrates and cross-breeds a vast array of art-historical sources and genres from both the post-Renaissance Western pictorial tradition and the straight tradition in twentieth-century photography, which Wall has been increasingly ready to admit into his overall oeuvre.

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Of the two, it is the latter case on which Brückle focuses here. The argument is supported by Wall's strategic amendments to his own back-catalogue, his gestures of inclusion and exclusion and reworkings of past works in ways that are designed, in part with an art historian's eye to context formation and value creation, to shape the reception of his own work. In this context, Brückle focuses on Wall's reworking of a single image from *Landscape Manual* (1969), one of his earliest conceptual works, which pre-dates his official *catalogue raisonné*, as *After 'Landscape Manual'* (1969–2003), a banal stand-alone black and white image. This serves as Brückle's key to understanding the 'integrative drive' of Wall's work. Contra Trodd, far from being pictorially 'deforming', even such basic divisions as 'cinematographic' and 'documentary' are integrated as so many stylistic and genre resources within his overall practice. Thus, unlike many writers on Wall, Brückle understands Wall's project as fundamentally *synthetic*: far from creating individual tableaux, as is often claimed, individual works only gain their full meaning from his increasingly complex and self-referential corpus as a whole.

In this respect, Wall's practice might be thought to mirror Gerhard Richter's: just as Richter's colour charts or photo-paintings only take on their full significance in relation to his overall practice of painting, so individual black and white 'documentary' images or 'cinematographic' light-box tableaux only take on their full significance in relation to Wall's oeuvre as a whole. Unlike Richter, however, Wall's integrative drive brings together his works' range of genres, tropes, models and media sources in the service of a certain vision of realism. In this respect, Wall inherits Walker Evans's notion of 'documentary *style*'; that is, a conception of documentary according to which the documentary no longer picks out a non-artistic journalistic function but a problem of artistic style. In doing so, Brückle claims, Wall's greatest achievement is to have conferred upon photographic art something like the gravity of the canonical arts' relation to their own histories. For all their differences, then, Brückle and Trodd concur in contesting Fried's appropriation of Wall as an inheritor 'across a jagged breach' of the project of modernist painting.

Christine Conley's paper, '*Morning Cleaning*: Jeff Wall and the *Large Glass*', likewise takes aim at Fried's appropriation of Wall, in this case by contesting head-on his reading of a specific work, *Morning Cleaning, Mies van der Rohe Foundation, Barcelona* (1999). Contra Fried, for whom this absorptive tableaux exemplifies Wall's renewal of the anti-theatrical aims of high modernist painting, Conley takes Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass* as the model for its structuring tensions, which prevent any 'intercourse' between the animate/inanimate, male/female figures, between Alejandro, the window cleaner, and Georg Kolbe's sculpture of a female nude, *Dawn*. While acknowledging the work's absorptive motifs, Conley takes issue with Fried's gender-neutral analysis, bringing out with considerable ingenuity a number of formal and iconographic parallels between *Morning Cleaning* and the *Large Glass*, – from Mies's cruciform column and Duchamp's horizontal division of the glass, through the window cleaner's squeegee and the chocolate grinder's bayonet, to the gender division and thematics of liquids in both.

Rather than simply projecting Duchamp's allegory of frustrated desire wholesale onto *Morning Cleaning*, however, Conley reads it as a 'Duchampian delay' within the historical context of the (reconstructed) German pavilion designed by Mies van der Rohe for the 1929 International Exposition in Barcelona. Mies's original building is known largely through thirteen master prints known as

Berliner Bild-Bericht photos. A temporary structure dismantled after only seven months, on the eve of National Socialism, it has long been regarded as encapsulating the defeated utopian aspirations of the avant-garde; its reconstruction as museum-cum-tourist attraction further hollows out whatever utopian social hopes it might once have embodied. By bringing this context to bear, her paper opens onto a reading of *Morning Cleaning* beyond Duchamp's tale of arrested sexual desire, pointing allegorically to the frustrated dreams of the avant-garde to engage meaningfully with the working class. This is a central tenet of both Wall's critique of conceptual art, and his interpretation of Dan Graham's *Alteration to a Suburban House* (1978), which Wall reads as 'counter-memorial' to the defeatism of conceptual art's critique of art, and which Conley takes as the background context for *Morning Cleaning*. By bringing such a wealth of reference and intertextuality to her interpretation of the work, in its relation to Wall's other works and writings, Conley's paper implicitly bears out Brückle's claims for the rich interdependence of Wall's corpus, while flagging a range of meanings with respect to class and gender for which there is no place in Fried's account of it as a marriage of absorptive tableaux with the aspirations of high modernist painting.

This overview cannot do full justice to the nuanced accounts of particular works and theorists that mark many papers in this volume. It does, however, indicate the extent to which art history becomes closely entwined with criticism in many of them. Throughout, one finds an interleaving of traditional art-historical, philosophical and historical contextualizing of the object, with a more first person, visual, sometimes partisan, engagement with it. This is in large part owing to the relatively recent historical focus of the papers collected in this issue and the different protocols and conventions of art history 'proper' and criticism: where one demands an objective, detached or non-judgemental discourse, the other calls for a form of writing that is evocative and sometimes metaphorical, and includes the aesthetic, emotional and critical responses of the viewer. Where one is historical and interpretative, the other has both descriptive and normative dimensions, entailing that one take a stand on the value of the art in question. The interpenetration of these modes of writing about art reflects the permeability of contemporary art theory to philosophical and theoretical issues at large in the culture more generally and, in so far as artists are equally open to these same cultural forces, this explains the responsiveness of ambitious art to critical theorization. The intertwining of such forms of writing characterizes what the editors would claim to be a feature of the best contemporary writing about art.

Another feature of the collection as a whole is the extent to which the claims of individual papers hold clear implications for the arguments of others. This is so probably because two issues in particular structure the argument of many of the papers, in part no doubt as a response to our original call for papers: Wall's history of photo-conceptualism and the implications of his practice, and Fried's critical positioning of recent photographic practice as an inheritance of the absorptive pictorial tradition and the aims of high modernist painting. Enough has been said already about the Wall essay, but the terms of Fried's argument may need to be spelt out more clearly here.

Even when it is not explicit, it should be clear by now that Fried's recent articles and book on photography served for many of the authors represented here

as a provocation and a challenge. Fried's claim, in brief, is that photography matters as art as never before because it has become the medium that raises the question of its own status as art most acutely. This, the argument runs, is because photography's mechanically produced (and reproduced) character – notably the causal, optical-chemical mechanisms underlying its indexicality – conspire to make the photograph resemble an object as much as, if not more than, a picture. In Fried's terms, this is an 'ontological' worry about photography per se, rather than a merely contingent worry about certain photographs, which arises as a result of the way in which photographs as a kind of image come into existence. As such, objecthood is a risk posed internally by the causal substrate of the photographic process that photographic artists must neutralize so as to secure their photographs' existence as art. As will be apparent to those who know Fried's criticism well, the photographers in Fried's canon now occupy a position vis-à-vis the threat of objecthood that the work of Frank Stella and Anthony Caro occupied for him over forty years ago. The structure of the argument is similar – albeit with a greater stress on the dialectic between what Fried now calls 'to be seenness' (rather than theatricality) and 'absorption' *internal to* the works held to triumph over objecthood; it is the artists and the medium in which they work that have changed. This has much to do with the significance of Wall for Fried's canon, given the negotiation between cinematographic and documentary (the tropes of the 'staged' and the 'straight') throughout Wall's oeuvre, and the foregrounding of his work's artefactuality – its status as an object in the world among other objects – by means of his light-box constructions, given their substantial projection from the wall.

Much like minimalism, then, photography precipitates a crisis of the picture and thereby places a particular burden on the photographic artist to establish their photographs' credentials as pictures, and ultimately as art, rather than mere objects. The artists selected by Fried are thus seen to deploy various strategies for establishing their work's existence as art, many of which involve procedures quite alien to the sort of digital manipulation sometimes likened to painting with pixels. Think, for example, of Thomas Demand's idiosyncratic practice of building models of paper and cardboard to photograph, rather than photographing what his models represent directly. This is interpreted as establishing a thoroughgoing intentionality – in Fried's words, a Demand photograph is 'a wholly intended object'. Without some sign of this assurance, the photograph, much like the 'literalist' object according to 'Art and Objecthood', makes no particular demands upon viewers, who are thereby given free rein to substitute their subjective experience of the work for the meaning intended by the artist. The work, as Fried paraphrased Donald Judd, need only be 'interesting'.

In the heat that will no doubt be generated by Fried's claim to see in recent art photography a renewal or inheritance of the project of high modernist painting, what is likely to pass unnoticed is that Fried's argument, *like that of his critics*, implicitly rests on some widely accepted, but highly contentious, assumptions about the relation between causality and intentionality in photography. What would need to be established, to get Fried's claim about photography's distinctive *internal* relation to objecthood off the ground, is that a photographer's use of the causal mechanisms at his or her disposal is different *in kind* to, say, a painter's use of the mechanisms at his or hers. But why think that? Take, for example, gravity's effects on oil as opposed to acrylic when allowed to run off an unprimed vertical

canvas, or the viscosity of a particular thinner combined with the properties of a particular means of application and the weave of a particular canvas, given its particular absorptive properties. The skilful painter (think of Morris Louis) manipulates all these *causal* interactions in the service of his or her ends. As Joel Snyder has consistently argued, there is no principled difference between photography and any other medium in this regard: the photographer employs a particular camera, lens, aperture and shutter speed, and sets all manner of other variables, including lighting, filters, and (in principle) choice and temperature of processing and developing solutions in the service of their particular ends. Being a skilled practitioner is being able to employ or, better, *act through* such means to achieve the end envisaged. The critic who claimed that, because the transfer of paint from brush to canvas in Titian or Velásquez is governed by causal laws the result cannot be art, would sound foolish indeed. The interesting question is why we seem so tempted to entertain what, prima facie, look like analogous claims about photography: wouldn't it be akin to saying that, given all the mechanical operations of a piano in the causal chain between depressing the keys and generating the resulting sounds, there is no such thing as the art of piano playing?

In sum: the use of digital technologies by Wall, or of models by Demand, may have foregrounded the intentional activity of photographers, but it was always there. Though it is *possible* for a photograph to be produced entirely by accident (a curtain blown by the wind knocks over a Polaroid camera and trips the shutter) or entirely naturally (the impression of a static lace curtain on a patch of wall faded by the sun is arguably a cameraless, agentless photograph), the use of the photographic apparatus by artists and photographers has always been saturated by intention. This does not, however, conflict with the fact that many artists, including photographers, delight in harnessing chance effects and making accidents happen. Though it falls beyond the scope of this introduction to deal with this in detail, what is striking here is the degree to which art history and photography theory share several of the foundational, but arguably contentious, assumptions of the philosophy of photography when it comes to understanding photography's nature as a mode of picture-making. It would take more space than is available to us here to establish this, so we will simply note that it is one of the aims of the broader research project of which this volume forms a part to interrogate such issues with the resources that art history and philosophy offer when brought into dialogue.

Despite the obvious impact of Fried's interventions, none of the papers collected here follows him in claiming that the most ambitious recent photographic art is such because it asserts its own status as art in ways that renew the anti-theatrical aims of high modernist painting. Yet neither, it should be noted, do they accept the countervailing postmodern perception of photography as the anti-aesthetic medium par excellence, in virtue of its mechanical nature and causal basis. Rather, several seek out the deeper aesthetic dimension of works that might at first blush seem to negate aesthetic engagement. One way in which they do this is by positioning the work concerned in relation to a longer historical lineage or a wider cultural field. It is probably significant that, where the work of the presiding genius of the anti-aesthetic gesture is invoked, Duchamp is represented, not by the readymade, but by his elaborate *Large Glass*. The implication would seem to be that work not included in Fried's cannon does not occupy some *terrain vague* of objecthood, but forms part of alternative traditions.

As such, the essays collected here suggest that photography after conceptual art may present broader implications for the larger field of art history and criticism. Conceptual art and its theoretical framing would at one time have been construed as announcing the demise of the privilege, if not the bare sensory necessity, of the aesthetic reception of works of art, in so far as the locus of the work was deemed to be the idea or statement. As a consequence, the photographs and texts associated with conceptual art have not always been looked at as carefully as they might. At least on the evidence of the papers presented here, this perception of the art of the period and its legacy is no longer ascendant. At the same time, however, another conclusion to be drawn from this collection is that it no longer seems essential to the work of criticism to operate with a strong notion of medium. Rather, the papers explore what we have termed the hybrid condition of art since the 1960s. If, for Fried, all art worthy of the name is the product of an intention to extricate the work from its entanglement in everyday contingency and indeterminacy, then this might be taken to imply that the critical task is one of specifying the medium. Fried and Rosalind Krauss seem to concur on this point, even if Krauss proposes a more limited application of the notion to the work of individual artists, such as James Coleman's adoption of the slide show as his 'medium'. In Krauss's usage, by contrast, the alternative risk of overstating the capacity of individual artists to invent media *ex nihilo* — and thereby undermining the possibility of a work counting as *an instance* of what is by nature a publicly shareable category, by depriving that notion of its publicity, is pushed to the fore. Be that as it may, what seems to be contested in many of the papers in this issue is the residual emphasis on the medium in both Fried and Krauss. None of the authors represented here seems particularly exercised about disciplinary boundaries or medium specificity: photography mingles freely with graphic art, text, sculpture, painting, performance and so on. Even so, Fried's argument will not go away because now, as in 1967, he has touched on the nerve that runs through the art of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, namely, that a great deal of the art of the period constitutes itself as such precisely by calling into question artistic autonomy, authorial agency, medium specificity and its conventions. Ironically, ruling out such work as art worthy of serious consideration turns out to have been just the provocation required to motivate the most sustained criticism of that very work.