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Camera and Image: Mediator and Interface

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Abstract

How can art, specifically photography, illustrate the limitations of vision? What do those limits reveal about perception and knowing? To explore these questions two distinct mechanisms need to be discussed in relation to creative practice, Paul Virilio’s augmenting lens that forever changes the photographer’s perception and the image acting as an object for both Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s embodied experience and Jean Baudrillard’s simulacrum. The photographic image becomes an index by exposing the relationship between photographer and image. The camera is a tool, to Virilio a prosthetic eye, which immediately affects the photographer’s perception of her environment. The phenomenal world is the one that is photographed, a subjective experience. The tension between surface and reality, image and object, removes the photographic experience from an experience of the real. The making of the image closely parallels the act of viewing the image. A dual experience emerges from the photograph, the creation of the image and the viewer’s act of reading, inferring. An image, as an index, is open to multiple interpretations, placing equal weight on each participant, viewer, and creator, so that there is no hierarchy of interpretation, experience, or meaning. In this thesis these questions are explored in relation to a creative practice embedding theory with process and outcome.
# Table of Contents

1 List of Illustrations

3 **Introduction:** *embedding inquiry into the photographic relationship*

3   **Finding the Real:** *the point of inquiry*

6 **Warp and Weft:** *toward a reflective methodology*

9 **Photographic Actions:** *images as embedded results*

11 **Photographer as Subject:** *the pinhole camera as tool for processual inquiry*

11   **Constructing a Cipher:** *from object to camera*

16  ‘*Residue of an Experience*: theory into process becomes performative

25 **The Photographer’s Space:** *the camera as mediator*

25   **Time and Place:** *defining the photographer’s instant*

28 **Along the Edge:** *the image’s position in relation to photographer and camera*

31   **Augmented Eye:** *the camera as an embodied mechanism*

37   **Inside and Outside:** *the subjective machine*

43 **An Image at Its Limits:** *making the real*

43   **Along the Camera’s Border:** *navigating through the photographer’s perceptions*

48   **Interface and Membrane:** *the image between camera, photographer and viewer*

53 **Conclusion:** *building a processual inquiry*

56 **Appendices**

57   **Appendix IA:** *Pinholes - Records*

62   **Appendix IB:** *Pinholes - Dark Rooms*
Appendix IC: Pinholes - Positives

Appendix II: Horizons

Bibliography
List of Illustrations


