You Have the Eyes of a Stranger

The Distancing Effect of the Digital Photographic Portrait

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# Contents

List of Illustrations                     p. 4  
Abstract                                 p. 5  

Introduction                             p. 6  
  - You Have the Eyes of a Stranger     

Section One: From a Stranger Past        p. 8  
  - Perfect Strangers                  
  - A Strange Relationship             

Section Two: Recontextualising the Stranger Effect  p. 13  
  - Brecht and the Stranger Effect      
  - Benjamin and the Distancing ‘Aura’  
  - Ruff and the Stranger Effect        
  - Developments for the Stranger      

Section Three: A Grotesque but Beautiful Stranger  p. 19  
  - Defining the Grotesque             
  - Man Ray and the Grotesque Photograph 

Section Four: Digital Photography – a Strange Time and Place  p. 23  
  - Digital Distance                   
  - Within a Strange Time              

Section Five: A Closer Look at the Stranger  p. 26  
  - The Stranger Relationship           
  - A Strange Type of Subject          
  - Cindy Sherman and the ‘Self’ as a Stranger 
  - Viewing Strangers                  
  - A New Way of Looking               

Concluding Thoughts: Pause                p. 38  

Image Appendix One: All the Strange Men   p. 39  
  - Documentation of the eleven ‘untouched’ portraits 

Image Appendix Two: You Have the Eyes of a Stranger  p. 50  

Reference List                           p. 61  

Bibliography                             p. 63
List of Illustrations


Abstract

You Have the Eyes of a Stranger considers digital portrait photography as a medium that invites distance between subject, viewer and photographer. The images critique the use of a technology that is immediate, affordable and obtainable, and considers the power of control it affords its beholder. The work explores how subjects are perceived and used as a result of a medium where memory, imagination and fantasy are allowed to co-exist. The male is the subject scrutinised, while the (female) photographer’s influence visibly becomes part of the images.

Walter Benjamin argued that due to their accessibility, and their ability to be reproduced and distributed to a mass public, photographs shatter capitalist, bourgeois tradition by destroying the ‘aura’ of the sacred, authentic and original art object1. Through the methodologies employed, You Have the Eyes of a Stranger exemplifies how digital photographs have the ability to create distance and mystique, resulting in an ‘aura’ of their own.

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