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Editorial

*Studies* is now in its sixth year of publication. Founded in 1974 by Sol Worth as the journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Visual Communication, *Studies* was a ground-breaking venture in academic publication: a scholarly journal devoted to investigation of visual communications. In the Editor's Introduction to the first issue, Worth wrote that, in the view of the Society,

> It was felt that despite the inherent dangers of starting a new publication there was, and had been, so much interest shown by so many people, for so many years, in the relationship between the study of culture and society and such things as painting, the graphic arts, sculpture, dance, movies, photographs, television, and so on, that the time had come to create a common forum where scholars and practitioners interested in the visual media and society could come together to show and discuss what they were doing. [1974:1]

We believe that *Studies* has justified the confidence of its founders. Its high standards and commitment to quality have won recognition and respect from a growing audience in a variety of fields and disciplines. However, while we are proud of the journal, we have long recognized the budgetary and disciplinary limitations imposed by our original auspices. Consequently, in November 1977, we obtained the agreement of the Society’s Board of Directors to enter into negotiations with the Annenberg School Press, an activity of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, for the publication of *Studies*. These negotiations were successfully concluded last summer. This issue, Volume 6, Number 1, begins *Studies in Visual Communication*.

Our new auspices will provide us with the funds to initiate triannual issues in our first year and move toward quarterly issues in the near future. We will also have the resources to engage in promotion for the first time—to make *Studies in Visual Communication* visible to the large and varied potential audience who have not previously encountered *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication*.

The new title will make more apparent our existing commitment to solicit and publish contributions from a wide and diverse range of disciplines. We will publish qualitative and quantitative, theoretical and empirical studies on visual communication, drawing from authors in such fields as communication, anthropology, sociology, psychology, art history, film, television, photography, media studies, American studies, history, and philosophy. To help us obtain and evaluate high-quality submissions from the many areas of scholarship that focus upon aspects of visual communication, we have enlisted the assistance of a distinguished group of Consulting Editors. In addition to the considerable benefit we derive from their advice and guidance, their presence on our masthead serves as a manifest signal of the breadth of our interests and the integrity of our standards.

Among the primary areas of continuing interest to us are the study of human behavior in context through visual means; the study of image-producing technologies and other pictorial and visual means of communication; the analysis of visual symbolic forms from a cultural-historical framework; visual theories, technologies, and methodologies for recording and analyzing behavior and the relationships among the different modes of communication; the analysis of the structuring of reality as evidenced by visual productions and artifacts; the cross-cultural study of art and artifacts from a social, cultural, and visual perception; the study of the forms of social organization surrounding the planning, production, and use of visual symbolic forms; and the use of the media in cultural feedback.

*Studies in Visual Communication* will continue the tradition of a refereed journal that offers scholars and practitioners a forum to publish innovative and original works which deal with visual communication. In his inaugural Editorial, Sol Worth wrote:

> The only genuine justification for a publication is the work which it reports and the work which it encourages—by the example of its contents, as well as by providing new work with a place from which it can be seen, used, criticized, and replaced by newer, more interesting, and more illuminating work. [1974:2]

We agree. We also recognize that this position entails a challenge to us, as editors, to provide our readers with the finest examples of scholarship in our field. This is a challenge we accept with enthusiasm and confidence.

Larry Gross and Jay Ruby
In Memoriam

Margaret Mead

(1901–1978)

She told me that Boas had told her that films could be an aid to, but no substitute for, discipline, intelligence, and memory. And I remember, too, the evening she and one of her godchildren, my daughter (a tiny child), pulled over a stepladder to reach the peanut butter on a high shelf: “Your genes are only the final limit to your power.” And I can’t forget the night she called to say she was sending me a stenotype machine to help me record body motion. And when it was of little help, we shared the insight that machines such as this or typewriters or computers contained no science or poetry—but were prostheses no better than the knowledge, the skill, and the precisions involved in their use.

She respected tools and believed that they were to be used whenever they were nonintrusive extensions of ourselves. A talented and devoted archivist, she never permitted a film or a tape (or a book) to be a final product. She sacrificed to send cameras and film to students in the field and spent long and precious hours with their films when they returned. She never forgot that she was an anthropologist and a teacher. Not “what are they” but “what are they about” was her demand.

She was a teacher—and a student—and a human. As she sat and talked with children, with students, with the elderly, and with her colleagues, she filled notebook after notebook with data, hunches, and arguments to be saved, thought about, reviewed, and sometimes published (with credit) later. Although often independent and at times seemingly solitary, Margaret Mead was never alone. She collected and appreciated other humans. She learned from, taught, and worked with others, for Margaret Mead was a very social scientist.

Ray L. Birdwhistell
Growing Up

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparel'd in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.

William Wordsworth,
Ode: Intimations of Immortality from
Recollections of Early Childhood

Her first teacher, her grandmother, Martha Ramsay Mead.

Margaret with her mother, Emily Fogg Mead.
With Richard, her brother, in Nantucket, 1911.
Professor: Franz Boas.

Teacher and friend: Ruth Benedict.

With Luther Cressman, 1918.
At Barnard: with Leonie Adams and Pelham Kortheuer; they called themselves "Ashcan Cats."

First field trip: Samoa.
Wearing mourning dress at a funeral, Peré Village. (Courtesy of Reo F. Fortune)
Peré Village, Manus
1928

Doll play, a projective technique, Alitoa Village. Arapesh. (Courtesy of Reo F. Fortune)

Sepik District
New Guinea
1931-1933

With Reo Fortune in Peré Village. (Courtesy of Reo F. Fortune)
Carrying Piwen, about 2 years old. (Courtesy of Reo F. Fortune)
Bali and New Guinea
The latmul
1936-1939

Wearing festival dress, with children in Bajoeng Gedé, Bali. (Courtesy of Gregory Bateson)

With children in Tambunam. (Courtesy of Gregory Bateson)

In the screen room, Tambunam. (Courtesy of Gregory Bateson)

With Gregory Bateson, in Tambunam Village (latmul), Sepik District, New Guinea. (Courtesy of Gregory Bateson)
Manus again—and again

Return to Peré Village, 1953: with Lenore and Ted Schwartz. (Courtesy of Ted Schwartz)

In Peré Village, 1964. (Courtesy of Lola Romanucci-Ross)

With Lola Romanucci and Ted Schwartz and Adan, 1964. (Courtesy of Lola Romanucci-Ross and Ted Schwartz)
Samoa
Iatmul, Manus

With old friends, Tambunam Village, Iatmul, 1967.
(Courtesy of Rhoda Metraux)

Return to Samoa, 1971.
Peré Village, Manus, 1971.
(Courtesy of Barbara Heath)

Last return to Peré Village, 1975.
(Courtesy of Barbara Heath)
Margaret Mead: Anthropologist of Our Time

With Robert Goelet, 75th birthday party, in the Hall of the Peoples of the Pacific, December 1976. (Courtesy of Peter Goldberg)

With her granddaughter, Vanni Kassarjian, New York, summer 1978. (Courtesy of Beryl Bernay)

With Catherine Bateson at Burg Wartenstein, 1973. (Courtesy of Lita Osmundsen)

With Gregory Bateson and Malcolm Arth, First Margaret Mead Film Festival, AMNH, 1977. (Courtesy of Peter Goldberg)
Thanks to the human heart by which we live
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

Wordsworth.

_Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood_
Margaret Mead and the Shift from “Visual Anthropology” to the “Anthropology of Visual Communication”

Sol Worth

I would like, in this discussion, to explore a shift in how certain problems in the study of culture have come to be conceptualized. These problems may best be understood by examining how one label, “visual anthropology,” led to the creation of another, “the anthropology of visual communication.” In order to delineate and examine some of the arguments, problems, and methods involved in this shift it will be helpful for me to cite, and to use as my explanatory fulcrum, the work as well as the persona of Margaret Mead.

I am doing this on an occasion meant to honor her, but am aware that even that act—as so often happens with Dr. Mead—inevitably gets mixed up with a review of the history and problems in communications and anthropology. I should add that I am aware that, even as we try to develop a history in this field, we also are in many ways that same history.

To introduce some of these issues in the history of communications study, let me quote from an informant whose comments and life history may lay the groundwork for certain of the problems I will be talking about. Some of you may still remember a television series of several years ago called The American Family. It consisted of 12 one-hour film presentations. One of the major participants of that visual event was Mrs. Patricia Loud, the mother of that “American” family. In a letter to some of her acquaintances which she subsequently made public, Mrs. Loud wrote:

Margaret Mead, bless her friendly voice, has written glowingly that the series constituted some sort of breakthrough, a demonstration of a new tool for use in sociology and anthropology. Having been the object of that tool, I think I am competent to say that it won’t work...

Later in her letter she continues:

Like Kafka’s prisoner, I am frightened, confused... I find myself shrinking in defense, not only from critics and detractors, but from friends, sympathizers and, finally, myself... The truth is starting to dawn on me that we have been ground through the big media machine and are coming out entertainment. The treatment of us as objects and things instead of people has caused us wildly anxious days and nights. But I would do it again if, in fact, I could just be sure that it did what the producer said it was supposed to do. If we failed, was it because of my family, the editing, the publicity, or because public television doesn’t educate? If we failed, what role did the limitations of film and TV tape play? Can electronic media really arouse awareness and critical faculties? Did we, family and net-work alike, serve up great slices of ourselves—irretrievable slices—that only serve to entertain briefly, to titillate, and diminish into nothing?

Margaret Mead did not photograph, edit, or produce this visual event that Pat Loud speaks of. But in ways that I will describe she can be understood to be a major influence in this and other attempts to show a family in the context of television. More importantly, her work over the past fifty years can help us to understand many of the questions that Pat Loud’s cry of distress raised for her (Loud 1974).

There are, it seems to me, at least three basic premises which Mrs. Loud’s letter forces us to examine. First is our deeply held and largely unexamined notion that all or most photographs and, in particular, motion pictures are a mirror of the people, objects, and events that these media record photochemically. Second is the questionable logic of the jump we make when we say that the resultant photographic image could be, should be, and most often is something called “real,” “reality,” or “truth.” A third concern, which is central to Pat Loud personally, and increasingly to all people studied or observed by cameras for television, whether for science, politics, or art, is the effect of being, as she puts it, “the object of that tool.”

When The American Family was first shown on American television in 1972, mass media critics, psychoanalysts, sociologists, and historians as well as Time, Newsweek, and The New York Times felt compelled to comment. Almost all—except Margaret—expressed dismay, upset, and even anger over the series. Many of these strong feelings were no doubt occasioned by the films themselves—by the way they were advertised and presented as well as by the events depicted in them. But much of the upset was also caused, I believe, by the fact that Margaret Mead said publicly, and with approval, that this notion of depicting a family on television was a worthwhile, revolutionary, daring, and possibly fruitful step in the use of the mass media. She even compared the idea of presenting a family on television to the idea of the novel, suggesting that it might, if we learned to use it, have a similar impact upon the culture within which we live.

Interestingly enough, in October 1976 the United Church of Christ, the Public Broadcasting System, and Westinghouse Television will present a series titled Six Families, in which the same thing that was tried in the Loud family series will now be done on a comparative basis. It seems that most of the objections of social scientists to the Loud family series were that this use of “real” people on TV was unethical, immoral, and indecent. It made, many people argued, a nation of prurient Peeping Toms out of the American people. It is of course the church which in our society can take initiative and argue that an examination of how people live, shown on TV, is not only not Peeping Tom-
ism but the most moral kind of act for a mass medium. We will have to see whether social scientists, TV critics, and newspapers will even notice this second instance of an American family.

The problem for those who heard or read what Margaret Mead said about this new use of film — whether they were academics, newspaper people, or even subjects — was that we were just beginning to understand what Bateson and Mead had said in 1942. We were just beginning to accept the idea that photographs could be taken and used seriously, as an artistic as well as a scientific event. We were not ready to acknowledge that we were beyond the point of being excited by the fact that a camera worked at all. It was, after all, understood as early as 1900 that photographs and motion pictures could be more than a record of data and that they were always less than what we saw with our eyes. Let us look at how it started.

The first set of photographs called motion pictures was made by Edward Muybridge in 1877, as scientific evidence of a very serious kind. He invented a process for showing things in motion in order to settle a bet for Governor Leland Stanford of California about whether horses had all four feet off the ground when they ran at a gallop. Our popular myth about cinema and truth started here. If the motion picture camera showed it — everyone seemed to, and wanted to, believe — it had to be so. Edison in the United States and Daguerre in Europe invented more capable machines for taking motion pictures, and, interestingly enough, the first films made with those primitive motion picture cameras between 1895 and 1900 had much of the spirit of what is still called ethnographic filming. They presented what the early filmmakers advertised as “the world as it really was.” Lumière’s first film showed French workers in the Peugeot auto factory outside Paris lining up to punch a time clock. Edison’s first film showed his assistant in the act of sneezing. Both Edison and Lumière went on from there to depict other “real” and “documentary” scenes of people walking in the street, bathing at the beach, eating, embarking on a train, and so on.

The issue of reality in film was already being argued in 1901 — not by scientists or artists but by film manufacturers. The Riley Brothers catalog of 1900–1901 states:

The films listed here are the very best quality. They are clean and sharp and full of vigor. They are properly treated in the course of manufacture and do not leave the celluloid. None of the subjects have been “faked.” All are genuine photographs taken without pre-arrangement and are consequently most natural.

The notion of a systematically made ethnographic record of the geographic and physical environment of a city — in a style conforming to ideas promulgated by Collier (1967) — was also being advertised and sold in 1901. The Edison catalog for that year states:

New York in a Blizzard. Our camera is revolved from right to left and takes in Madison Square, Madison Square Garden, looks up Broadway from south to north, passes the Fifth Avenue Hotel and ends looking down 23rd Street.

Such a film could have been made with an ethnographic soundtrack on instructions given to modern ethnofilmakers by archivists in the United States and several countries in Western Europe.

We have, it seems, come a long way from the days when just being able to make a picture — moving or still — of strange or familiar people in our own or far-away lands doing exotic things was excuse enough for lugging a camera to the field or to our living rooms. In those earlier times, from 1895 to about 1920, the term “visual anthropology” had not yet been coined. People just took pictures, most often to “prove” that the people and places they were lecturing about or studying actually existed. In some cases, they took pictures so that when they returned to their own homes they could, in greater detail and with more time study what these people and things looked like. Archaeologists quite early — around 1900 — began to use this new miracle machine. They found the camera not only quicker than making copy drawings of the artifacts they uncovered, but more accurate — truer to life, or to artifact. I believe that it was from the use to which archaeologists put photographs that cultural anthropology developed its first, and still extremely important, conceptual paradigm about the use of pictures: that the purpose of taking pictures in the field is to show the “truth” about whatever it was the picture purported to be of — an arrowhead, a potsherd, a house, a person, a dance, a ceremony, or any other behavior that people could perform, and cameras record, in the same spatial frame. The subtle shift that took place when we expanded on the role of photography in anthropology and archaeology, from the use of a photo of an arrowhead or a potsherd as evidence of existence to the use of a photograph of people as evidence of human behavior, is a particularly important and unexamined aspect in the history of social science, and especially in that of anthropology.

A conceptual difficulty that we now face is based on the fact that the avowals of truth in photography made in the 1901 film catalogs now seem self-evident to us. In fact, a major problem in thinking about the use of photography in social science today is not that photographs are not true, but that that is not the purpose we use them for. One of the clearest expressions of this dilemma, and one that shaped much of my own think-
ing about the uses of photography in social science, can be found in the appendix to *Growth and Culture* (1951), by Mead and McGregor, based on the photographic work of Bateson and Mead in Bali. Mead writes:

Anthropological field work is based upon the assumption that human behavior is systematic . . . that in such research the principal tool is consciousness of pattern [and] that the anthropologist brings to this work a training in the expectation of form.

Mead then explains how the photographs taken in Bali were used. Of some 25,000 still pictures taken by Bateson, 4,000 were chosen, from which McGregor, Mead, and the Gesell group could find a set of patterns derived from a study of photographs—not from the photographs themselves—which could then be compared with patterns found in the study of American children. It is important to emphasize Mead's subtle but powerful distinction: the patterns of behavior in this case were derived from the study and analysis of the photographs, not from the photographs as a magic mirror of pattern. Mead states quite clearly: "These photographs are designed not to prove, but to illustrate . . . ."

In effect, what Mead has been trying to teach us is what one of her teachers, Ruth Benedict, taught her: "patterns of culture" are what we are presenting when we do anthropology, and taking photographs, or looking or taking notes are tools for articulating and stating the patterns that we, as anthropologists, wish to show to others. It is that old lesson about culture which we seem not to understand as it affects our use of the photograph. Somehow our myth system about photos helps us to forget that the photo is not the pattern. Somehow we tend to think of a photograph not as something we use—as evidence, to illustrate pattern, to inform ourselves, or to make statements with—but as something we call "truth" or "reality."

One should distinguish between the photo as a record about culture and the photo as a record of culture. One should also distinguish between using a medium and studying how a medium is used. In terms of the camera, the distinction I want to emphasize is that between the scientists' use of the camera as a tool to collect data about culture and studying how the camera is used by members of a culture. This distinction is, I feel, central to understanding the work done with this medium of communication in the last 80 years. On one level, the photo is an aide-mémoire to the scientist, equal to his pencil, notebook, or typewriter. It is not—as we now know, from recent work by Chalfen (1975), Ruby (1975), and others—merely a bunch of snapshots or home movies made by an anthropologist. In the hands of well-trained observers it has become a tool for recording, not the truth of what is out there but the truth of what is in there, in the anthropologist's mind as a trained observer puts observations of "out there" on record. Photography as a record about culture spans the distance from the casual snapshot, which reminds one of what a house or an informant looked like, to the systematic work of a Mead, a Bateson, or a Birdwhistell. And here I must emphasize that it is not their photography that is important, but their analysis of it. The reason their photographs and films are records is that they were taken in ways which allowed them to be analyzed so as to illustrate patterns observed by scientists who knew what they were looking for.

Let us now turn to the second level of analysis: the analysis of photographs and films as records of culture—as objects and events which can be studied in the context of the culture within which they were used. The photographs and films analyzed in this way are understood to be parts of culture in their own right, just as conversations, novels, plays, and other symbolic behavior have been understood to be. Here I am talking about looking at how someone takes a photograph or puts together an advertisement as well as a movie. One is concerned at this level, for example, with finding patterns of moviemaking by anthropologists, physicists, and Hollywood entrepreneurs, by college students, by "artists," by people using 8-mm cameras in our own culture as well as by Navajo Indians or members of any other group who are making photos or movies for purposes of their own.

Here one looks for patterns dealing with, for example, what can be photographed and what cannot, what content can be displayed, was actually displayed, and how that display was organized and structured. Was it arranged according to how these people tell stories? To how they speak, or to the very language and grammar that they use? Recent work by one of my students, Earl Higgins, seems to indicate that, even among the congenitally deaf, the "grammar" and related patterns of their sign language influence how speakers of American Sign Language structure films that they make.

Here again, although Margaret Mead was not the first to think of examining photography and films in this way, she articulated the ideas and related them to an understanding of culture in a larger and systematic way. Mead, in the study of *Culture at a Distance* (Mead and Metraux 1953, based on work done in the 40s) pulls together the work of a larger group of people who were using symbolic events produced by members of a culture to find patterns of that culture.

"Films," she wrote, "being group products, have proved to be more immediately useful for the analysis of culture than have individual literary works." In this
book she included the first set of systematic analyses of films by a group concerned with looking for cultural forms and the patterns evidenced in them. This work provided a cornerstone on which almost all the content analysis of our current mass media rests. The development of the cultural indicator program (Gerbner 1972, Gerbner and Gross 1976) and the ongoing analysis of mass media and particularly TV content are the fruits, it seems to me, of one direction developed from the notion that the photograph, in still or motion picture form, can be a record of culture in its own right, to be studied for its own patterns within specific cultural contexts.

The term “visual anthropology,” coined after World War II, became associated with conceptualizations keyed to using cameras to make records about culture. Visual anthropology did not connote the study of how cameras, and pictures in general, were used within the context of a culture. The term did not seem to connote studies that led us to ask what we could learn about a culture by studying what the members of a society made pictures of, how they made them, and in what contexts they made and looked at them.

The idea of modes of symbolic communication designed to articulate a variety of symbolic worlds is not new to social science. Cassirer, Whorf, and many others discussed the idea that symbols and symbol systems, language, myth, stories, and conversation, as well as poems, sonatas, plays, films, murals, and novels, create a multiplicity of worlds.

Nelson Goodman (1968) addressed himself to this line of speculation at a meeting commemorating the 100th anniversary of Cassirer’s birth. He asks a set of questions that I would like to use to discuss some of the current issues we face in an ethnography of visual communication. He asks, “In just what sense are there many worlds? What distinguishes genuine from spurious worlds? What are worlds made of? How are they made, and what roles do symbols play in their making?” I think that it is only recently that we have been able to apply these questions to an endeavor we call anthropology, to a mode I call pictorial-visual, and to a concept that has come to be called communication. It was Margaret Mead who helped, not only by her work but by her teaching and her encouragement of the work of others, to integrate those three concepts: anthropology, communication, and the visual-pictorial mode.

When in 1963 (Worth 1964) I began to point out that films and photographs made by such diverse groups as students in college, people in their homes, or mental patients in hospitals could be looked at as ways in which these different people structured their worlds, rather than as “true images” of the world, I thought I was merely bringing a truism about drawing and painting up to date. Most people who talked knowledgeably about pictures in 1963 accepted the fact that Picasso drew the way he did because he meant to structure his pictures that way, not because he could not draw like Norman Rockwell, or even the way he himself drew in other periods. True, Roman Jakobson in 1950 pointed out that most people wanted pictures to look like a Norman Rockwell—what we now call photographic or snapshot realism—and were disturbed by abstract painting. Jakobson ascribed this both to the fact that most people were ignorant about the conventions of painting and to the strength of conventions about pictures—when they were known. He, himself, it seems, tended to believe that the “natural” way to know pictures was to know what they represented; that to draw abstractly, or in nonrepresentational or non-Western patterns, was somehow to act unnaturally. Interestingly, it was the early Russian film-makers and film theorists—Eisenstein, Dovzhenko, and Pudovkin—who, following the Russian formalist linguistic theories, first pointed out that films structured reality just as speech did; that patterns of images, like patterns of sounds, were worthy of study. But so strong was the myth of photographic reality that even a Roman Jakobson could feel that representation was the natural way to make pictures.

For many leading social scientists today, as well as for our students, visual anthropology means taking photos, photo records, movies, ethnographic movies, and film footage—all for research. These labels carry a descending aura of science about them. Film footage, unorganized but uncut, is considered the most scientific and therefore the truest because it captures “real behavior” presumably untouched by human eye or brain—a pure record. An ethnographic movie or a documentary movie is the least scientific, not only touched but sometimes, it seems, tainted by human consciousness and often damaged as a scientific document by something called “art.” As recently as last year, the chairman of the Department of Sociology at Columbia University wrote in The New York Times—in shock—that a documentary film about the Yerkes Primate Laboratory expressed the filmmaker’s biased view of the subject, still naïvely stating that he expects something called a neutral, unbiased, objective view in a film shown on television. The director of the laboratory—who gave permission to the filmmaker to make a movie to be shown on television—expressed anger that the film did not portray the “truth” about the laboratory. He too evinced shocked dismay that the filmmaker presented his own personal view of what he observed in the laboratory—that the act of making a movie allowed such a “distortion.”

There is no point, however, in taking a position that if film is not “objective truth” there is no use to it. Many ethnologists have provided us with stills and motion pictures which they and others have used to articulate some of the most important statements about culture made in recent years. I am arguing that there is
great value in visually recorded data about behavior and culture—so long as we know what it is that we recorded, so long as we are aware of how and by what rules we chose our subject matter, and so long as we are aware of and make explicit how we organized the various units of film from which we will do our analysis.

Let us return to Cassirer and Goodman's concept that symbolic events produce different works and different worlds. Faced with such a concept, and most specifically with the fact that pieces of film—no matter how made—are patterned constructions, structured, at best, by a trained mind, the truth-seeker through film becomes confused, dogmatic, and angry. It is hard enough for some people to believe that an analysis is a construction, a structuring of reality. Most of us simply do not want to face the fact that what we loosely call primary photographic data is also a structured event. A photograph, just as any picture, is constrained both by who made it and how it is made, as well as by what it is a picture of. It should be obvious that, just as pictures are not simple mirrors of what is out there, neither are they artifacts which have no relation whatsoever to what they are pictures of. The ethnographic photographer is free to take a picture of anything his system allows him to photograph, but he is also constrained by the fact that he must point the camera at some objects in the world "out there." These things out there also constrain what the picture will be like. While "out there" does not determine what the photo will look like, it is obviously not irrelevant. In one sense we want as many different worlds as possible, and in another the fact that symbols and signs can best be used to construct different worlds poses almost insoluble scientific problems. In order to distinguish genuine from spurious worlds we slip into the belief that cameras record reality, that reality is true, and that film recordings are therefore "true." This fantasy about symbols suffers from the error of imposing logic-like or logical-sounding rules upon a domain that is governed by a set of rules that may not be like those of logic. For example, one basic convention of logic states that a true conclusion cannot be drawn from a false premise. Researchers who want to use film as a record of behavior want it to be the case that from a true premise—a picture or photograph—one cannot draw a false conclusion; that is, that from "true" films one cannot get "false" data. One introductory lecture in logic should be enough to make any student see that this is not the case. Unfortunately, false conclusions can be drawn from anything, and getting the "truth" on film, even if it were possible, will not guarantee the subsequent analysis or the conclusions drawn from it.

Suppose we agree that pictures and films can be used as illustrations of pattern—of how films themselves are structured as well as of how people and their behavior in films are structured. Suppose we agree that symbolic events produce symbolic worlds, and that these worlds are not (for the moment) to be thought of as either true or false but rather as communicative articulations. Suppose we think of a film, whether it be footage without editing or footage after editing, as the way the maker of the film structures the world that he or she presents to us. Our job as viewers, then, is first to determine what he means by the film he shows us. A mere recording without conscious selection, emphasis, and instruction by the filmmaker is more often confusing than illuminating. The viewer of such a recording "knows" that an inanimate camera did not expose the film and decide what to shoot and how to shoot it. If the film does not instruct us how to interpret it, or if it is not constructed in a way that allows us to use conventional techniques for interpretation in that medium, we most often ignore the film, or treat it as an annoyance. Ray Birdwhistell, with whom I have watched too few films, has often said to me, "I can't stand watching most so-called ethnographic movies. The man who made it won't tell me what he's doing. I'd rather look at behavior as it occurs and not have to spend all my time trying to guess how, when, and for what reasons a filmmaker made a movie of it."

Seven years ago, again led by Margaret Mead, a group of researchers interested in both records about culture and records of culture met and decided that our concerns could best be clarified by founding a new organization, with its own journal. Margaret Mead helped us to set up the Society for the Anthropology of Visual Communication, as part of the American Anthropology Association, and the National Anthropological Film Center at the Smithsonian Institution.

The kinds of problems that our members study include all the ones that I have mentioned, for there are indeed still not enough systematic records about the cultures of the world that can be used to illustrate patterns of culture, as well as the newer ones I will be talking about in a moment.

In developing a history of the shift from visual anthropology to the anthropology of visual communication, and in trying to understand Margaret Mead's role in this development, it is most important to understand that the study of culture is not accomplished by pitting symbolic worlds against one another. Those of us who are involved in using photos and films as new technologies through which we can record cultural artifacts and events, and those of us who are involved in studying how pictures are put together to make statements about this world, are equally concerned with how this particular symbol form—the picture—can be of use in the study of culture. We include scholars such as Richard Sorenson (1976) and Jay Ruby (1975, 1976), who are struggling to delineate theories of the photograph as evidence, as well as those who are following up on the work that John Adair and I
(Worth and Adair 1972) did when we gave movie cameras to Navajo Indians to see how their patterns of structuring differed from or resembled ours. Most recently, *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication* devoted a complete issue to a study by Erving Goffman of values and social attitudes about gender that can be derived from an analysis of some 500 advertising photographs (Goffman 1976).

Some of us are arguing that it is as silly to ask whether a film is true or false as it is to ask whether a grammar is true or false. Or whether a performance of a Bach sonata or a Beatles song is true or false. The confusion about the use of pictures, in social science particularly, arises out of the fact that, although symbol systems are designed to articulate many worlds, our way of thinking about such systems allows us, even compels us in certain contexts, to ask, ‘Are you trying to tell us that all symbolic worlds are equally true, equally correct, equally right in their portrayal of the ‘real world’?’

One can indeed ask if a particular grammar is a useful description of how people talk. One can ask whether that sonata was written by Bach or whether that was a Beatles song. If the notion of a grammar is understood to be an articulation, a statement about how people talk, one can ask in what ways it corresponds to how people do talk. But this requires that we conceive of a grammar, a performance, or a film as a statement or a description of and about something. It requires that we understand that the grammar or the film is not a copy of the world out there but someone’s statement about the world.

Acknowledging this, some of our younger colleagues are beginning to study such things as how home movies are made as a social event, as well as what they mean as a semantic event. We are looking, as Chaffen (1975) has done, into how home movies and photo albums are displayed and exhibited, to whom, and for what social purposes. Ruby has begun to study the patterns apparent in the photos that most anthropologists make in the field. Here he finds that in most cases they are indistinguishable from those made by journalists. That, in fact, while their written ethnographies do in fact differ from journalists’ reports or travelers’ letters home, their photographs do not. For the most part, anthropologists and (as Howard Becker [1974] has shown) sociologists are professional scientists—verbally only. When it comes to the visual mode of articulation and data-gathering, most produce snapshots, documentary films, good (or bad) home movies, or ‘artistic’ works. It is 40 years since Bate son and Mead took their photographs in Bali and, sad to say, in that 40-year period there have not been many social scientists who have been trained in what they developed.

The framework of the anthropology of visual communication suggests that symbolic worlds are patterned and amenable to being studied in a larger framework than pictures. Primarily, this framework helps us to look at pictures as that aspect of culture called communication. It suggests that we treat pictures as statements, articulated by artists, informants, scientists, housewives, and even movie and TV producers. We can ask what the articulator meant, and then we can ask whether our interpretation of what was meant is good, bad, beautiful, ugly, and so on. But by asking whether our interpretation of what was meant is true, we are, I am afraid, merely asking whether we guessed right. What we should be trying to understand is how and why and in what context a particular articulator structured his particular statement about the world.

Treating film (the camera and celluloid) as a copy of the world, rather than as materials with which to make statements about the world, forces us into the impossible position of asking whether performance is true. Understanding that photos and films are statements rather than copies or reflections enables us to look explicitly, as some of us are now doing, at the various ways we have developed of picturing the world.

The parameters along which we deal with statements are many. Anthropology is in some sense a set of questions about human behavior. Ethnography is in some sense a method by which certain kinds of questions can be answered. By considering pictures and all behavior in the visual mode as possible communication acts, and by understanding that these acts can produce only statements or assertions about the world rather than copies of it, we are enabled to consider the kinds of anthropology we want to do about the visual pictorial forms that we can and do use. In this kind of anthropology we want to consider both how the photograph and the film can be used as evidence by the scientist and how people actually have used it as evidence, as document, as entertainment, and as art.

It is only within this framework that we are able to return to Pat Loud’s questions with which I opened this discussion. Margaret Mead actually did influence that ‘show,’ just as she did influence this paper. Craig Gilbert, the producer of *The American Family*, was also the producer of *Margaret Mead’s New Guinea Journal*. Gilbert spend a great deal of time talking with Dr. Mead about films and about culture while he accompanied her on her return trip to some of the places she studied in the past. He learned from her that one American family well observed might reveal or, in her words, ‘illustrate’ a pattern about American families. The patterns that he observed and the way they are structured were his and his cameramen’s and editors’. The idea of trying to present them on film was learned from Dr. Mead.
Pat Loud said it "didn't work," that when she saw it she felt herself "shrinking in defense." She felt that she had been "ground through the media machine" and "treated as an object." Then she said she would do it again if it did what the producer said it would do. Craig Gilbert had told her that by showing one family he could show a pattern that might be true of many American families.

We know now that it was not the editing that prevented the programs from "working." We have tried to reedit some of that footage. We have invited Mrs. Loud to do it herself. It seems to be the case that it cannot be done so that it does not look as if it were produced as a drama or a soap opera for TV. Because it is on TV and TV does not present the truth any more than film does, or than film editors do. It presents, we now know, a structured version of what someone saw, presented in a context—television—of drama, soap opera, sporting events, "news," and commercials. We have learned how to interpret what we see on TV. If we were to study that footage in other ways and not show it on television, we might find patterns that would illustrate other structures—other worlds.

Learning how to study something as complex as a 12-hour film put together from 200 hours of film based on 400 hours of observation is part of the study we are now calling the anthropology of visual communication.

There are now heated controversies about whether Mrs. Loud and her family were fooled, whether (leaving television aside) sociologists and anthropologists have the right to photograph real people for their studies. Again, in 1936, and reported as early as the second page of Growth and Culture, Dr. Mead faced this question. She wrote, "I have used real names throughout. The people knew we were studying and photographing their children; indeed, they often helped set the stage for an afternoon's photography. Very cautiously, but quite definitely, they gave us permission to live among them and there is no need to blur their contribution by disguise or subterfuge." Adair and I followed this advice in our own work among the Navajo, first getting their permission and then acknowledging their great contribution. They were in their own films and they wanted to be seen. We can tell what would have happened had the press and assembled academicians called them primitive, selfish, cruel. As we have described in our book about this project, they themselves did not think of their films as the truth about Navajos. Their films were true about, as one of them put it, "how you tell a story." Those of us interested in the anthropology of visual communication are trying to find ways to study how people can and do depict man-kind, oneself, and others in all their diversity.

In 1967, I returned from the field with 12,000 feet, 480,000 single frames of exposed film, and 7 movies made by Navajo Indians. I was looking for patterns, but I was overwhelmed (as so many researchers are when they return from the field) by the masses of observations and possible data I had collected. The patterns were far from clear in my mind. I was tired. Dr. Mead asked me to show some of the films and talk about my research to her class. I did. The next day after breakfast, she quietly set up the projector, pulled up her typewriter, and asked me to start going over the footage with her. I had worked with this material for over a year. Margaret Mead began to teach me how to find patterns in it. When I finally said something like, "I know that, why do we have to keep going over it?", she replied somewhat tartly, "Sol, you begin with intuition, but you can't rest your case upon it. You must build upon it and make clear to others the patterns that seem clear to you."

This paper is my continued attempt to follow that advice. Doing the anthropology of visual communication is an attempt by a large group of students of communication and anthropology to find methods and theories by which they too can make clear the patterns that they discover and create.

Notes
1 For a more detailed exposition of the relation of content analysis to the analysis of culture through pictures, see Editor's Introduction to Erving Goffman's "Gender Advertisements" in Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication 3(2).
2 For a specific study of how advertisements picture the world, see Goffman 1976.

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Studying the Home Mode: An Exploration of Family Photography and Visual Communication

Christopher Musello

Family photographs fill the desk drawers, albums, walls, attic chests, and closeted boxes of our homes in ways that personal diaries, writings, or documents never have and perhaps never will. They are produced in this country at a prodigious rate—Wolfman (1974) estimated the output of amateur photographs in 1973 at over 6 billion—and picturetaking is widely considered an appropriate activity in a broad range of social events in the family. As a craft, it is transmitted largely on an informal basis through word of mouth and imitation. Its products are employed unself-consciously in an ongoing process to meet daily needs, interest, and obligations. Family photography is a pervasive and sustained form of symbolic behavior producing a vast resource of "native documentation." Folklorists, sociologist, psychologists, anthropologists, and others have not surprisingly been drawn to these materials both as statements about social life and personal experience and as data of culture (cf. Worth 1972). Studies attempting to articulate a system for decoding these materials have proliferated, and speculation about their functions and significance is quite extensive. Yet actual fieldwork examining the nature and usage of family photography and the conditions which support and produce it is limited. This paper reports on a research project designed to produce a general description of family photography as it is pursued in daily life and to examine its properties as a form of documentation and communication (Musello 1977).

I have sought here to systematically describe and characterize home mode photography as a rule-governed and socially patterned communicative process. This is an ethnographic approach to visual communication, which examines photography as social activity and photographs as the symbolic artifacts of that activity. From this perspective the researcher examines who uses the medium, in what contexts, for what purposes, and under what social and cultural rules, conventions, and restrictions (Worth 1976; Chalfen 1974). Patterns in photographic activity (photographs and picturetaking) are sought as well as the interrelation of these patterns with context and function (cf. Hymes 1974). The research finds its antecedents in Worth's ethnographic studies of visual codes (Worth and Adair 1972; Worth 1974) and in Hymes' ethnographies of communication (1964; 1974) and subordinates the examination of film codes and cognitive/perceptual aspects of the mediation to the study of the social behavior and activities which produce these forms. Films and photographs are regarded as being shaped by social norms rather than psychological or technical variables (Chalfen 1974; 1975a).

For the descriptive purposes of this study, communication activities and their artifacts will be analyzed through a structure of events and components. These descriptive units have been adopted and expanded from Chalfen's (1974) sociodidactic framework to provide for a more thorough description of still photography activities. They include: (1) planning, (2a) behind-camera shooting, (2b) on-camera shooting, (3) processing, (4) editing, and (5) exhibition. These units are to be described in integral relation to a set of five communicational components: (1) participants, (2) settings, (3) topics, (4) message form, and (5) code. Each conceptual unit will be explained below. The events and components yield a grid of thirty relationships for systematic analysis (see Table 1) through which we can "delineate the structural qualities of both the symbolic forms per se and the social activity and relationships that surround the production and use of the visual forms" (Chalfen 1976:42).

At the time of this study the methodology had been applied only to an examination of teen-age filmmaking and home moviemaking (Chalfen 1974; 1975a). In applying it in this study, my intention has been to provide an initial description of home mode still photography and an evaluation of its communicational functions, both for the particular data it might yield about the mode and as a necessary base from which to assess its value as a data source.

A sample of twelve families was used for the study; eight of the families completed a full interview schedule averaging five to six hours, while members of four families were interviewed for less time. The sample size is too small to establish trends or patterns; accordingly, informants were chosen fortuitously. The families were all Euro-American, predominantly middle class; all had children, and marriages ranged from three to thirty years' duration. Two sources of data were relied upon: interviews and observation. The interviews involved two phases: (1) directed interviews with the families aimed at characterizing the events and components of their photographic processes and (2) discussion and analysis of both those images which the families had produced and those made by others but included in their collections. Family members were asked to describe, discuss, and evaluate a sample of photographs from each storage and display unit, and to explore the distinctions between these units, their criteria for evaluating their images, and their functions and formal/syntactic intentions in shooting particular photographs. Observation focused on family interactions in viewing pictures (in all cases the parents were observed in the activity, while in five cases these occasions evolved into full family events), and on the relation of informants' statements about their photographs, to what the researcher saw in the

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pictures. This resulted in a survey of photograph collections, with an analysis of who shoots, who the participants are, what the settings are, and what the topics and code features are.

The Events of the Home Mode

The approach in this study has been to take a detailed look at the ways in which individual families integrate the photographic medium into family life and experience. The method is qualitative rather than quantitative, and no pretense to sample validity or quantitative measures is implied. Nonetheless, in the following pages generalizations regarding the nature of the mode will be drawn from patterns and consistencies observed in the practices of the families studied. As such, the value of these findings will lie less in general verifiability (although it is felt that many of the findings here will be borne out by further systematic research) than in implications regarding how the mode is employed and in its properties as a communicative form. The analysis will begin with a discussion of the events of the home mode.

The home mode events include the full range of behaviors, activities, or performances surrounding the production, organization, and use of family photographs. Through the description of these events we locate the photographs within the flow of interpersonal interactions and the social contexts from which they take their form and significance.

### Table 1
The Sociovidistic Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning</th>
<th>Settings</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Message Form</th>
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<td>Shooting:</td>
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Planning Events

These events incorporate any activity or performances in which decisions are made about when to take pictures, of what to take pictures, and how to take them. We are dealing here not only with choices and decisions made in direct anticipation of, or in response to, a "picturemaking" event, but also with any decisions made prior to the event which would affect when people are likely and able to take pictures. Factors here would include when film is kept on hand, the number and accessibility of cameras, when they are "brought along," and choice of film.

A family's "preparedness" to shoot may be considered a form of planning, be it conscious or not. In these terms, most families in this study claimed to have film and cameras readily available and to use film slowly and keep rolls in cameras for extended periods. Planning in this more formal sense, people generally carry a camera only when they have a purpose; few subjects in this sample carried cameras simply to be prepared for pictures, except perhaps on vacations. This planning, however, is of a general nature, never more than a broad notion of occasions and subject matters to be documented. Planning exists to the extent that people are predisposed to shoot certain things at certain times by their sense of the purposes and appropriate uses of photography. Thus, each fam-
ily stated at minimum that they planned to shoot and
carried the camera on "special occasions" and
"whenever the family was going somewhere," usually
listing a repertoire of typical and perhaps necessary
events destined for the family document. The list uni-
formly included such events as Christmas, birthdays, Easter, vacations, and family gatherings.

Planning thus might extend to occasions and gen-
eral subject matters (most often people), but beyond a
decision to shoot a great number of pictures to cover mistakes or to provide extras for distribution, any plan-
ing regarding specific shots or techniques to be used in shooting was rare among home moders. The consis-
tent exception was "traditional" pictures. These in-
cluded both specific repeated pictures and shots of
traditional events planned for each year at regular in-
tervals, often taken in a fixed setting in a consistent
format.  

Finally, a generalized, discriminating sensibility
might also develop over time to condition shooting. For as people view their photographs and become aware of preferences, interests, and problems in viewing, they occasionally develop prescriptive and pro-
scriptive plans for future shooting of similar events. Adjustments of this kind include instances where
people found their collections to be "repetitive and boring," and reduced shooting, or when they found
the need for reference points in slide shows and so planned the inclusion of street and place signs.

Planning was limited as a conscious process and
little time was spent on it. Several subjects stated that planning "never works," and most did not even feel
that it was necessarily desirable. For beyond making
assessment for the coverage of a small structure of
events and people, value was placed on "catching" the unanticipated, the spontaneous, and the candid.
Planning, therefore, seems largely a matter of routine
or patterned predispositions and habits in this mode
that influence the ability to, and likelihood of, taking pictures as well as any decisions concerning what and
to shoot.

Shooting Events

The shooting event is divided into two elements, be-
hind-camera and on-camera, in order to allow for a
more precise characterization of the message form.
However, it should be understood that these analyti-
cally distinguished activities constitute aspects of but
one interactive process.

Behind-camera events. These events incorporate
any activities or behaviors not on-camera which struc-
ture the use of the camera. They include camera tech-
niques, the maker’s "shooting aesthetic," and all ef-
forts to direct subjects being photographed. They also
include consideration of patterns and tendencies in
shooting which develop and/or persist over time.

Most home moders feel they "just take pictures." As with the planning events, and with essentially all
events of the home mode, primary attention lies not in
the elements and processes of mediation, but rather in
the subject matter. In most instances this orientation is based on an "understanding" of photography as a
mechanical and "realistic" form of recording. As fam-
ily photographers' understanding and use of the me-
dium become more complex, they may actively incor-
porate technical/aesthetic considerations and at times
even aspire to an "artful" depiction of their subjects.
Indeed, the range of skills evidenced in the use of the
camera by family photographers may be extremely
broad, as can their critical vocabulary and their for-
mal/syntactic appreciation of the medium. However,
despite these skills or suggested competence, the
family photographers in this sample generally set out
simply to "record" what was before their cameras,
thus applying a greatly simplified set of standards to
their shooting while concerning themselves primarily
with on-camera activities.

Formal manipulation or evaluation seems essentially
irrelevant to home moders, although some minimal fac-
tors may be consciously attended to in the service of
this "recording" process. "Centering" is the factor
most frequently considered; "background," "getting
all of the subject in," "getting detail" in faces, com-
position, and proper lighting follow. Although many of
the family photographers mistrusted their ability to get
what they wanted, all of them expressed a preference
for simply shooting "a lot," particularly on important
occasions.

Home moders' shooting might nonetheless be char-
acterized by loosely defined "styles," to be seen in
terms of the relationship between cameraman and
subject; the distinct expectations for, and efforts in-
vested in, each form of shooting; and the pattern of
component considerations which influence each. The
most prevalent style, in this sense, is the posed pic-
ture, even though the families uniformly expressed a
preference for spontaneous, "natural" images. This
method was generally prescribed by home moders for
portraits, "serious and formal occasions," and "spec-
ial events," but was most often resorted to for the
control it afforded. Many home moders feel candid
shooting is simply too difficult and are willing to sacri-
fice "naturalness" for control. As a result, when pos-
ing pictures, most photographers claim to feel a re-
sponsibility for "the total picture" including
background, lighting, composition, and the arrange-
ment or direction of subjects. Yet in most instances the
pose is used simply to fix the subject without the sub-
sequent effort at formal control.

The aim of the candid/spontaneous style, by con-
trast, is to minimize the photographer's intrusion
through shooting discreetly in order to "catch" the
"everyday," the "typical," and the "natural." Control
of formal elements is not expected here, and many photographers in fact claimed that candid shooting essentially "exonerates" them of responsibility for any technical considerations. Luck, timing, and patience are generally felt to be the photographer's tools for these purposes, and while photographers at times directed subjects to ignore them, they generally relied on surprising subjects in one way or another.

The interactive/spontaneous style of shooting differs from the candid most dramatically in its intent and approach to the subject. The image resulting from this style will most often appear to be merely a candid shot. But, as opposed to the candid/spontaneous style, the photographer actively intrudes with his camera here as an element of, or even to stimulate, an interaction between cameraman and subject. Frequently in these events the photograph is of secondary importance to the interaction that motivated it. As with surprise candid shooting, this approach is directed primarily at close friends or family ("someone who won't get mad at me"), and it tends to occur in group shooting situations or as people are "fooling around" or "sneaking up on" or "joking" with one another. This is perhaps the least-used shooting approach, but it is significant in the shooting of those families who photograph one another most informally, have the least rigid concept of the functions and "proper" uses of photography, and generally enjoy shooting. In this sense, further research may find this style of shooting predictive of a particular family orientation to photography.

These styles of shooting are not presented as original or precise formulations, but rather suggest common strategies employed by home moders when photographing friends and family. Their significance lies in the patterning they establish in the use of the camera with respect to the relations between subject and photographer; to the expectations they establish in photographer and viewer alike for control and "intentionality" on the maker's part; and to the conventionalized assumptions of the "appropriateness" of the different forms for different topics and participants. Home moders, for example, would not sneak up on the bride and groom at the altar to surprise them with a picture. The camera styles affected in behind-camera activities, then, are shaped and patterned by social convention, and they in turn play an important part in broadly shaping what and how home moders will photograph.

Another patterning of the shooting event is more readily seen in the various "shooting routines" family photographers establish in the treatment of recurring subjects. Easter, for example, is frequently recorded in pictures of children with new outfits (Figure 1). Christmas is recorded through a structure of secular events including snapshots of the tree and unopened presents and of the children opening the gifts and displaying them (Figure 2). Consistencies in these routines could be identified in the entire sample of families.

Shooting was also structured at times by explicit or implicit attempts to construct narratives documenting trips or special events and by a technique consistently employed by home moders that might be called "configurational shooting." This photographic routine was frequently employed at births, weddings, family gatherings, and other special occasions (Figures 3a and b). It involved posing participants in a number of combinations in order to depict a variety of associations, relationships, and bonds.

Finally, this research has suggested that the quantity, techniques, and subject matters of shooting vary interdependently over time. It was observed that when parents are young they produce the most photographs and that shooting will often be at its peak during the first years of the first-born's life and taper off after three to six years. Picturetaking may then decline completely or continue at a minimal level until a resurgence occurs as the children reach their late teens, and the family begins to travel and/or grandchildren arrive. In many cases shooting was at its most informal and spontaneous with younger photographers, who often shot "interactively" and covered a comparatively broad range of subjects. With marriage and the birth of the first child, shooting most often became increasingly family-oriented and focused overwhelmingly on the child. Photography of the first-born is perhaps the least structured, as parents shoot continually and
Studying the Home Mode

Figure 2  An album page of Christmas photographs. (Courtesy of John and Arlene Westphal)
spontaneously, but as the baby grows and successive children arrive, shooting may become perfunctory, relying heavily on posing. We can also note that with the oldest families in this study, shooting of the grandchildren seemed similar, both in intent and technique, to the shooting of the first-borns.4

While family photographers generally consider their shooting spontaneous and responsive to the subjects of the moment, their shooting seems to be patterned and more rule-governed than they believe it to be. And while these photographers attend only minimally to formal manipulation of the medium's code elements, conventional strategies for using the camera, and shared routines and notions regarding how one "appropriately" takes pictures, serve to structure both what and how family photographers photograph.

On-camera events. As previously mentioned, all photographs in which the subject is aware that he or she is being photographed represent a collaboration between the subject and the image maker. In this analysis, the on-camera events focus on all those activities or behaviors which structure the subjects on-camera, including their own efforts to "present" themselves.

It is overwhelmingly the case with home mode photography that the ultimate evaluation of a photograph will lie in the image's success as a likeness. How the image's subjects are presented, how they look, what they are doing, and how "funny," "typical," or "appropriate" their gestures and expressions may be are all significant as evaluative criteria. The behaviors of the subject and the moments at which they are fixed on film constitute, then, a major target of the symbolic manipulation in this mode. The shooting technique and environment of shooting will function significantly to shape these behaviors, but there is as well a complex of conventions, expectations, and behaviors attributable to the on-camera event which influence and shape the final product.

Most parents in the sample offered a paradigm for age- and sex-related behavioral expectations for children vis-à-vis the camera. Young children are considered easiest to shoot, submitting to almost anything until they are three or four years old, when they learn to pose themselves. During childhood years kids are thought to be impatient but still "appreciative of the attention," and boys are considered harder to pose and prevent from "mugging" than girls. It is generally agreed that children beyond age twelve are the most difficult and uncooperative subjects. While this model was not subjected to any systematic examination in this study, it nonetheless assumes significance as a widely shared "folk model" of expected and conventional sex- and age-typed photographic behavior. It can also be pointed out that the pattern of rising difficulty associated with the aging of children seems consistent with the decline in spontaneous and continual shooting and the increasing reliance on posed pictures taken in a limited range of special events.

Adults generally express little enthusiasm for having their pictures taken, especially as they gain weight or feel that they are showing signs of age. By convention, most prefer to be photographed when "looking good" and when able to control their presentation. It is not unusual for husbands and wives to restrict their shooting of each other.
The most salient and often commented-upon form of on-camera behavior is the pose. Many individuals frequently pose themselves without direction when a picture is to be taken, even if a candid shot is sought by the photographer. The positions struck have demonstrated a marked consistency across families and contexts in the sample of this study, and it seems plausible that a catalog of poses might successfully be developed. The origin and nature of these poses as photographic behavior, and their relation to such characteristics as sex and age, bear further analysis. In Figure 4, for example, the poses are highly stylized and possibly imitative of conventional "glamor" poses of the time. They seem clearly sexually stereotyped. Such poses as seen in Figure 5 are also "stylized" and were associated consistently through the sample with young males.

The studio pose represents an additional form of on-camera event. It is, however, largely an artifact of the photographer's direction and the specific conventions guiding this event. And, finally, in spontaneous pictures the subject is granted greater leeway in movement and behavior. "Mugging" is a frequent response and, generally speaking, each family has a member who consistently jokes and "makes faces" for the camera.

**Figure 4** A day at the beach. (Courtesy of George and Helene Dargaty)
Processing Events

This category, added to Chalfen's framework (1974), incorporates any decisions, performances, and activities which determine and/or shape when film may be developed, printed, and mounted; what film will be processed; and how it will be processed. While these events may seem to hold little relevance for filmmaking, they must be regarded as a significant aspect of the symbolic manipulations inherent in the still photography medium. Initially, in this event all decisions regarding what is processed and how constitute a first phase of the editing events, and the decisions inherent to selection and manipulation of the printing process provide an order of control equivalent to that of the shooting event. For these reasons, then, processing events may be thought of as a distinct conceptual unit.

It is one of the distinguishing features of this photographic genre that the families using it place little or no emphasis on processing events. In contrast to the "art photographer," for whom these processes are crucial, many families' knowledge is very limited here, and the processes are often considered largely beyond their control. Few of the families studied have ever even sought to return prints to processors when dissatisfied with results, and much of the time they were unable to judge whether deficiencies were the result of their shooting or of the processing.

A number of home moders had, at one time or another, developed and printed their own photographs, but these activities were never integrated for any sustained period of time with the family's photography.

Most often this involvement occurred when the individual was young, usually before the arrival of children, and was almost always adopted as a hobby associated with "artistic" photography, as distinct from family photography. There were some limited exceptions, but in no cases did the family members continue in this hobby for more than five years.

Editing Events

Editing occurs after processing and before the products are seen or displayed. It may involve accumulating, eliminating, or rearranging a series or group of images into a specific order or sequence. This category is expanded from Chalfen's (1974) formulation to consider decisions about retaining pictures as well as those regarding the groupings, collections, or storage devices into which the pictures, slides, and negatives are sorted. Analysis must also account for where and how the images are stored and examine how they are ordered within the various forms of display and storage.

The editing event was considered important by the family photographers. They believed implicitly that the accumulation and assemblage of chronologically ordered photograph albums and slide trays was desirable and should be a steady, ongoing process. There was significant variation in attention and activity among families in the sample, but their efforts were
generally far below their expectations and were frequently a source of disappointment or even embarrassment.

Photographs potentially go through numerous editing phases in the home mode processes. When pictures and slides are first received, they are "left out" for viewing by family members, and at this time a rough cut may be made in which "blank" or unreadable images will be discarded. From this point slides will often be placed in carousels for storage, but photographs will most typically be shuffled off to drawers, boxes, or some general pool to be sorted in some unspecified future. A portion of the families studied organized their collections in an ongoing process, but a comparable number had never sorted their photographic products in any way. For the clear majority, however, sorting and organizing were activities which had fallen into neglect. As with shooting, young couples tended to pay the most attention to these activities, and although this could not be examined here, it appeared that editing was often taken up again later in life.6

When and if slides and prints are edited and assembled, decisions regarding inclusion or exclusion in the collection will turn primarily on the evaluation of subject matters. Photographs may be excluded if they are repetitive, strongly out of focus, or improperly exposed; only rarely will content be a criterion. Home moders value even the least decipherable of their images for the moments that they record, and as a result even poorly exposed, damaged, or blurred photographs will often be saved (Figure 6).

Although the actual storage units into which photographs were sorted were varied, the ongoing general family album seems to be the predominant organizing form, supplemented by a general pool of unsorted photographs. How each unit is organized may vary, but chronology is the dominant organizing principle. Smaller, discrete units might be edited for a specific time period or a particular subject (most often vacations) and then ordered chronologically within this theme. One highly favored organizational unit was a chronology covering the growth and development of individuals and families (Figure 7). Home moders also embellished their photography with written narratives and often extended their notions of photograph albums to include various types of memorabilia including such items as tickets, programs, report cards, and certificates.

As families age and become accustomed to viewing and responding to their own slide shows and albums, they take more care in deciding what photographs to include. As with planning events, then, these decisions become more complex as they are informed by a sense of what will have meaning and interest for family members in the future. This is one of the many manifestations of the future orientation which pervades and shapes the use of this mode.

Finally, the criteria for selecting photographs for wall displays were more discriminating, both semantically and formally, than for any other display unit. In
general, only photographs considered exceptional in content and at least competent formally are displayed. Most families made a strong distinction between public and private display, and though the distinctions vary, everyone felt they were 'obvious' and could be assumed. Most consistently, families felt public displays should include formal portraits of family members, primarily the children or possibly the full family, frequently photographed for some special occasion. Private displays for areas such as bedrooms and family rooms were more inclusive and varied, and tended to include favorite photographs of exceptional personal and emotional significance. Once they were displayed in this way, 'reediting,' or replacement, was rare (except by the children), and wall photographs often spanned a period of up to ten years.
Exhibition Events

These events include any activities or performances in which photographs are shown and viewed in a group or individual context. In order to explain the varied forms of display and storage of family photographs, it is useful to view them along a continuum going from exhibition to nonexhibition events, for some elements of family collections are stored and never seen, while others are on perpetual display. The exhibition category must therefore account for patterns of storage and the accessibility afforded different photographic groupings as an index of the type and extent of viewing they receive. The researcher is heavily dependent here on his informants' reports of what they do; thus an accounting of these conditions not only serves to describe a systematic behavior but also provides some independent insight into what viewing is possible. Beyond these considerations an analysis of exhibition events must aim at characterizing the nature of all viewing events.

The viewing events are perhaps the culmination, or even the very point, of the home mode process. A number of broad trends and patterns can be suggested about the ways in which families accomplish their viewing activities, and yet even with the small sample used here, the extent of involvement and the significance associated with these events as a family activity vary widely. The relation of these variations to family history, as such, seems clearly a matter for extended research. However, the way in which families treated and located their collections seems clearly correlated with their viewing practices. As I have already noted, family collections range from ongoing organization, with prominent displays of photographs and albums, to collections in which all pictures are deposited in boxes or barrels and stored out of easy reach. Some part of all families' collections is found in drawers and closets, but again the extent varies. In general, in this survey, it has been found that as collections move from greater to lesser accessibility, viewing is less and less a public matter; friends and relatives are less likely to be included in these activities, and when they are, viewing will be more selective. In addition, as the organization and accessibility of collections decline, the events of viewing and using family pictures seem to have less and less significance either as a family activity or as an important family resource.

Only a select portion of a family's collection was generally accessible and acceptable for public viewing. Most often photographs "left out" for viewing included "new pictures" or particular albums — usually the most recent general family album, vacation albums, or in the case of young families, baby albums. Those photo units reserved and stored for essentially personal and close family viewing included older fam-

ily albums, weddings, "army albums," and collections which predated marriage. These personal images and collections were most often stored away in attics and basements.

The most accessible form of exhibition was, of course, the display of photographs on walls, tables, television sets, and bookcases. All families displayed pictures in this way, either publicly or privately, and it seems apparent that the public/private distinction itself may assume significance as a point of contrast between home moders. For some families felt that all display in public rooms was "inappropriate," while most families limited public room display to formal or posed images of family members. Those who shunned all display in parts of the home where visitors might readily view them generally placed no similar restriction on the exhibition of photographs in the "private" rooms, and at times did so quite extensively. In either case, we can note that these displays of the home mode often become fixtures or ornaments to family members and frequent visitors, so that they are only rarely noticed or discussed, and are even forgotten. Office photographs might receive similar attention; however, at times they are hung and consciously manipulated by home moders for their social value, much as wallet photos may be used and displayed in the course of social interactions. Nearly all the couples in this study were found to have photographs in their wallets or purses though many never showed or even viewed these themselves and seemed unsure of their reasons for carrying them. Yet these images were employed readily by those families who were most extensively involved with photography and by proud grandparents in interactions with others. Photographs were used in these contexts either to "update" people on family members, as a means of introduction, or simply as a basis for conversation.

As indicated earlier, the families which most actively and enthusiastically used this mode view photographs in a broad range of activities and with a broad circle of friends and extended family. However, the dominant movement within each family over the years was toward increasingly limited, personal, and immediate family use of these images. Family viewing occurs, at minimum, as an informal event stimulated by the arrival of new prints. Its most organized form typically occurs (and is perhaps required) in the viewing of slides. Families described viewing occasions as matters of "whim," frequently stimulated by one family member's (usually a child's) decision to search out a particular photograph or simply to browse through the collection. Interestingly, all couples stated that they rarely viewed pictures without the children being present; that is, parents uniformly conceived of this event as a family activity.
The actual events of viewing were not examined systematically in this research. However, the significance placed on viewing photographs, the involvement of family members in sharing pictures, and the use of these events as important joint activities merit further study. This research suggests, for example, that as families view their photographs repeatedly a pattern of responses, observations, and interchanges develops around particular images. Such a patterning suggests, among other things, the construction of a set of shared interpretations, remembrances, and identifications around the photograph collection. In addition, it seems that the viewing event itself may be examined systematically and comparatively as a site for the evaluation of intrafamily interaction. For clearly, as families view their photographs, they respond not simply to the pictures presented but also with and for one another.

The sharing of photographs with friends and relatives was generally quite limited among home moders. Few families were found to maintain any kind of traditional group viewing events, and generally relatives were only shown photographs when they visited. Similarly, the viewing of family photographs with friends or visitors was almost never a planned event. Viewing with friends occurred most often to illustrate or refer a particular subject, especially when friends had shared photographed activity with the family or when the family had returned from vacation with “interesting” pictures. Most home moders, however, are reticent to show their photographs to friends, fearing to bore their guests or perhaps to appear egocentric, and many also considered it simply “inappropriate” because of the personal nature of the pictures. Public displays in the form of Christmas cards and birth announcements were nonetheless approved by all.

As with all the events examined so far, the exhibition events also incorporated conventionalized notions of appropriateness which contributed to the patterning of the process of the home mode. Home moders generally professed a sense of the great importance of family photography and set out to accomplish it in ways which were clearly structured by social notions of “how you do family photography.” Once these pictures are produced, there is a significant variation in what families do with them and how they incorporate them into family life.7 Future research must study these events comparatively, across social and cultural groups, to clarify the nature of the patterns identified here and to discern the systematic social influences that produce variations in each of these activities.

The Components of the Home Mode

It should be recalled at this point that, as the framework set out here is employed in research, the communicative events and components are to be interrelated for the purposes of generating research questions and of ultimately characterizing and comparing genres of visual activity. The units are being discussed individually as much as possible in this presentation in the hope of providing some understanding of the regularities endemic to each aspect of the home mode process. The two final components in the framework (see Table 1), “message form” and “code,” can be dealt with briefly. Simply put, the unit “message form” calls for designation of the form or means of expression. For visual forms the designation refers to the visual style under study, in this case home mode, or family, photography.

By incorporating a “code” component, Chalfen suggests with regard to film that an examination include “description of photographic habits, conventions, or routines (in shooting and editing) and a description of social habits and conventions,” including patterns of on-camera behavior (Chalfen 1975a:97). It is through these patterned manipulations that Chalfen feels film styles or message forms will be defined. With respect to still photography, however, it seems clear that the units of any photographic code remain indeterminate (cf. Barthes 1975; Sekula 1975; Byers 1966) and, more pointedly, that family photography cannot be distinguished from other forms of photography on the basis of formal or syntactic features.

A code is understood here as “an organized subset of the total range of elements, operations, and ordering principles correlated with a field of reference that are possible in a given mode or family of symbol systems” (Gross 1974:59). Particular codes within any given mode are therefore generally to be distinguished by their distinctive organization of formal and syntactic elements. Two problems stand out in the application of this concept to family photography. Initially the analyst is confronted with that branch of commercial and/or “artistic” photography which either directly imitates or otherwise achieves or incorporates formal elements associated with the look and “feel” of family photography. Many of the images of Robert Frank’s The Americans might be placed in this category, for example, as would the work of other artists who manifestly mug the snapshot “style” (cf. Greene 1975). On the other hand, there are photographers who shoot pictures of personal subjects for private use only and demonstrate a proficiency with their equipment which is not ordinarily associated with the family photographer. In fact, as indicated earlier, research has suggested that home moders can be ranked along a continuum of skills ranging from complete incompetence to professional capability.
In the first case (that is, the snapshot aesthetic) the photographs may be distinguished from the images of the home mode primarily through an awareness of the history of their production and use, as well as of cues provided by presentation contexts, rather than through any evaluation of the formal elements of the photographs themselves. Similarly, it must be recognized that, while the images of the second case might be distinguished from home mode images because they exceed common notions of the formal components and standards of family photography, they are by definition artifacts of the mode precisely because of their usage. In both cases, it is not possible to distinguish the images of home mode from non-home-mode pictures solely on the basis of code elements. If a home mode genre is to be deciphered, it will be distinguished through the examination of the interaction of communicative behaviors, contexts, and artifacts and not through a specification of code elements. The code category here can thus yield no distinctive information in characterizing the home mode. Therefore, observations concerning formal/syntactic features have been incorporated elsewhere in this analysis as they become relevant.

**Participants**

From the beginning of this study, the home mode has been partially defined by characterizing its participants. It is a family medium used in the service of a family document, and a restricted pattern of family participation is consistently demonstrated; these factors focus and define the scope of the mode. The subjects are limited to a small network of immediate family members, friends, and relatives.

As to responsibility for shooting, it was found that in the majority of families in this study all members had used the family camera to some extent. Children frequently owned their own inexpensive cameras, but the larger share of family shooting was the obligation of the parents. Where photography was the domain or special skill of only one parent, women were as likely as men to be the primary photographer. Otherwise this task was divided informally between husband and wife according to areas of specialization or preference. Families also relied on professional photographers for baby pictures, wedding photography, portraits, and class pictures.

Those depicted in family albums may include a range of family, friends, and relatives. As a family ages, however, the range generally narrows because relatives are included with less frequency and the immediate family, most especially the children, becomes the primary focus. Significantly, it was found that following the birth of children the on-camera participation, or visibility of husband and wife in the family’s collections, frequently dropped dramatically, often to near exclusion. When questioned, most parents claimed that the idea of pointedly photographing each other seemed irrelevant or unnecessary. They therefore appear only infrequently through the bulk of their collections, possibly resurfacing as individuals and as a couple (as in prechildren albums) when the children leave home and especially when they travel.

The determination of who is to be on each side of the camera works demonstrably to shape the nature of the entire picturaking process and its subsequent products in this mode. In a picturaking situation which may be particularly laden with conventional prescriptions for behavior, as in studio photography or instances in which a group poses in a traditional manner, the influences of the interaction among participants will be diminished, but not eliminated. However, when an event becomes less rigidly defined in candid, spontaneous, and surprise shooting, photographs and photographic behaviors become increasingly responsive to the nature of the interactions among participants both on and off camera. Yet these photographic behaviors still frequently take a highly regularized form, as in the common ritual of children “sneaking” pictures of appropriately indignant parents, in the requirements imposed on a husband/photographer by a wife/subject, and the tendency of a child to “mug” for one parent more than the other. Such interactions may become as stable and practiced as those institutionalized within a family or any fixed group of people.

In the editing events, different forms of display (office photos or wedding albums, for example) obviously will be viewed by different audiences. Pictures on display in public rooms may be seen by any visitor, but generally only relatives and the closest family friends will view the albums or extended sections of the family collection. The viewing event is again primarily an activity of the immediate family.

The pattern of participants described in the home mode collection is that of a select group of individuals which tends to narrow as families age. This limitation yields a closed network of social relationships which impose a variety of restrictions and influences on the performances and behavior of each of the photographic events.
Topics

The content and significance of an image are by no means certain. The resonances associated with most photographs extend far beyond any single notion of topic or content. This discussion of topics draws not only from the "denotative" contents of home mode pictures but also from the myriad connotations associated by family members with their images. Thus while some description of dominant topics is called for, this discussion makes no pretense of tapping the infinite nuances of personal subject matters.

Most families stated an intention to produce a personalized record or history of family life; yet the topics of home mode shooting events were found to be relatively consistent and limited. This was most immediately indicated when informants were asked what they photographed. Their descriptions (often preceded by claims to shooting "the usual" or the "regular routine") provided a consistent paradigm of topics to be covered. Most families explained that they would not normally consider it appropriate to photograph everyday events; the subject matter of family photography was thought to be special events and people. Families readily and regularly listed the events of the home mode repertoire as children, vacation/trips, family gatherings, family activities, Christmas, birthdays, graduations, and weddings. The scope of shooting, of course, varied—some families covered only Christmas and a few other family events, while others shot steadily throughout the year. Yet even among the most voracious photographers, most shooting was consistent with a common model of family topics.

An informal survey of the family collections shows holidays, vacations, and special events to be a major and consistent spur to shooting throughout family life. Christmas (as a secular event) seemed the most common occasion for shooting, while Thanksgiving and Easter or other religious holidays (depending upon the group) were also regular topics. Certain key aspects of these events were photographed routinely each year, such as the giving of gifts, new clothes, and the gathering of the family. These aspects, as with other special events, were a dominant focus of family shooting because of (1) their "extraordinary" nature; (2) the significance families associated with them (and, conversely, the role of picturetaking in communicating or
topics are candid and, of vacations in fixed and/or activities considered obscene, embarrassing, or in some other way groups.

Vacations and trips were a particular order of special event. Travel photos inspired the most self-conscious attempts at "documentation" of any home mode shooting, emphasizing places, buildings, local practices, and the unusual. By contrast, photographs of vacations in fixed and/or familiar locales seemed to stress people engaged in activities and, as with most family shooting, sharply minimized the photographing of places and objects. Local activity around the home was photographed, though, only as the unusual intruded, and this was most often the first area where photography fell into neglect. Included here would be new or valued possessions, pets, a family football game, "catching the big fish," or occasional evidentiary shots of fire damage and successful gardens (Figures 8a, b, and c).

People are overwhelmingly the subject matter of the home mode. Any of the topics just discussed may find their most common realization in the simple depiction of a person or group, quite often without any detailed or recognizable visual context. As people become the specific topic, however, the pictures are increasingly directed toward, and evaluated in terms of, their qualities and effectiveness as likenesses. In studio or portrait photography, for example, the event, the photographer's intent, and the subsequent use of the photograph are defined by the effort to portray the person. With the addition of candid, spontaneous, or surprise techniques, the efforts at portrayal are typically extended toward "catching" or documenting the individual in activities ranging from the special to the banal; yet these photographs do not, to their users' sensibilities, incorporate the everyday as a topic of the mode.

The use of candid techniques for portraiture also serves to extend certain general notions of appropriate subject matter. The subject matter of the various home mode topics is generally patterned and guided by conventions of propriety regarding presentation (participants should look "good") and of activities or occasions for shooting (subjects should not be depicted in activities considered obscene, embarrassing, or in some other way socially objectionable). Generally, topics are limited to public or family activities and to the best presentation of the person. However, with the candid and, particularly, the surprise photograph, people may be photographed seemingly at any time.

Emphasis is frequently placed directly on violating normal shooting conventions to photograph people when they least want to be shot, when they are looking bad, or when they are engaged in an activity directly embarrassing to them or embarrassing as a photographic subject. Thus we frequently see in such shots seminude persons, mothers in curlers, and people vomiting, urinating, or passed out (Figure 9). In this way, topic conventions have essentially provided for an alternative topic and treatment form inasmuch as home moders may employ these "improper" alternatives to produce "extraordinary" or "outrageous" portraits intended to tease, embarrass, anger, or amuse one another.

Family photographers may, therefore, prove relatively versatile in the use of the camera as they photograph their accustomed selection of people. However, it was found that most families brought a basic shared conception of prescribed topics to their photography and that the bulk of their shooting remained within this structure. The pattern is clarified a bit more when the topics shunned by the family photographer are realized. The negative aspects of family life such as pain, death, anger, and sorrow are not seen; work, school, church services, and daily events such as cleaning, eating, watching television, or rising and dressing in the morning are not shown. The "family document" seems to present a highly selective and exclusive sampling from the events and activities of the family's life.

Figure 9 A surprise photo.
Settings

This component incorporates both the settings photographed and the locations in which home mode activities occur. A review of home mode photography reveals a patterned approach to and conceptualization of "place" among family photographers. As mentioned earlier, many events, occasions, and places find their portrayal in the depiction of people, frequently without other visual contextual data. Christmas or Thanksgiving may be represented through shared icons (Christmas trees, for example); however, the majority of settings and events are realized in "context-free" pictures of smiling people in lawn chairs, adults hugging children, and so on. Home mode photographers in fact rarely actively considered or sought to depict elements of the setting but rather shot where subjects "were" or sought to control the setting as a backdrop. Here they might attempt to avoid background distractions or meet such technical needs as lighting or locating children strategically. But the "sense" and substance of setting was nonetheless restricted to that which was located within the frame and surrounding the subject.

It was primarily only as settings became less familiar, most often in travel and vacation photography, that they received attention as objects for conscious representation. At these times visual aspects of the settings—panoramas, architecture, monuments, and so on—were identified and isolated for depiction or inclusion as people were posed and associated with them. It is only at this point that home moders commented on their shooting as an unfortunate, if necessary, selection from an environment, or recognized their photographs as discontinuous or discrete and disembodied fragments of the world.

Settings were occasionally incorporated with symbolic intent as a matter of identification or aesthetic appreciation by families who considered themselves "outdoor people." However, it is generally only as setting elements transcend the typical and everyday or hold out the interest of the unfamiliar that family photographers even begin to attend to them. Most shooting occurs in familiar locations, often in and around the house itself (often the kitchen or living room, but not bathrooms, and rarely in bedrooms), with minimum attention to the location. However, a significant pattern in this local shooting was found in the informal establishment of "ritual locations" in which subjects would be placed for pictures. These settings were generally defined more by traditional usage than by conscious choice, and they most commonly incorporated what family members considered the "nicest" features of the home (a fireplace, staircase, or piano, for example) as a positive reflection of both the family and the particular subjects.

Consistent with the selection of home mode topics, everyday life is rarely photographed, and settings per se are most often incorporated only as they host the "special" or themselves become unusual or unfamiliar. Shooting away from home does not extend freely to the rest of the world—we do not see laundries, subways, or supermarkets. The selection of home mode settings is patterned and restricted broadly by conventions regarding appropriate settings as well as by fundamental orientations to the relevance and significance of surroundings to the purposes of family photography.

Documentation and Communication in the Home Mode

The analysis and description of family photography in this paper suggests that what the home moder does with his camera and photographs is delimited and sharply focused by a system of conventions and rules. What seems to emerge is a structure of conventional usage which circumscribes and to some extent specifies the events and components of the process while allowing for significant variation in each family's participation. This research has further indicated that home moders do not employ the photographic code in any uniform or shared system of signification. The implications of these findings for both our assumptions about the nature of family photographs as "documents" and the function of family photography in processes of communication are fundamental. The examination of these assumptions and their grounding in empirical data are primary to the formulation of any research utilizing these materials.

The communicational properties of these documents might most readily be characterized in terms of the articulatory and interpretational processes through which they are produced and used. As characterized here, the processes of articulation are shaped by patterns and routines both in the selection of subject matters and in the use of the camera. Notions of the "appropriate" or "desirable" appear to guide the choice of topics and participants for shooting, and therefore generally circumscribe and regularize the contents of the family collection. Family photographers, for example, expressed the goal of recording the "growth and development of the family," and yet in common practice they sought almost exclusively to record their children. Parents appear only infrequently in these collections, so that the collections become scant documentations of adult life and only incomplete representations of family life.
Routines and patterns in picturetaking work similarly to structure these materials. Among those already mentioned are the frequent practice of documenting recurring events, like Christmas, through a regular set of shots; the conventional use of a limited and restrictive range of camera styles; the tendency to record events without incorporating contextual information (Figure 10); and, finally, long-term trends in family shooting which establish a pattern of broadest documentation in the family's younger years followed by an increasingly narrowed account of events over time.

Seemingly all phases of home mode use are fundamentally based in what Sekula (1975:37) has termed a "realist folk myth," through which photographs are conceived by home moders as mechanical recordings of real events. The processes of articulation accordingly received limited conscious attention from family photographers in this sample, and syntactic control was generally restricted to a small repertoire of considerations. Many home moders displayed an extensive formal competence with formal elements in discussing criteria for evaluating photographs; representational value, however, rather than aesthetic or expressive properties was the primary focus of evaluation. And even among the most sophisticated photographers in this study, the considerations which finally guided picturetaking were limited primarily to centering subjects, getting enough light, controlling background distractions, and "shooting a lot."

Symbolic manipulation in the home mode thus focuses largely on the selection and presentation of on-camera elements rather than on their mediation, and symbolic implication is manifested predominantly through these on-camera events. The symbolic articulation becomes a kind of minimal nonevent to the family photographer: his goal is reportage, as distinct (in his conception) from expression, and he achieves his purposes through the simple mechanical re-presentation that he believes the camera and photograph offer.

As these images are viewed and interpreted, home moders generally assume little or no intent beyond the iconic referential components, and accountability for syntactic manipulations is also minimized. Meanings and interpretations are most often based on a belief in the photograph's value as a document of natural events and on recognition of its iconic referents. The photographic allusion is increasingly expanded, however, as viewers interact with the natural events depicted and draw references and significances from a broad range of events, experiences, people, and responses which they recall, derive from, relate, and attribute to the depicted contents.

This affective investment or extension of the symbolic reference by the viewer was discussed by Sekula (1975:42) in another context. He explains the interpretive strategy:

More than an illustration [the photograph becomes] an embodiment; that is, the photo is imagined to contain the autobiography. The photograph is invested with a complex metonymic power, a power that transcends the perceptual and passes into the realm of affect. The photograph is believed to encode the totality of an experience, to stand as phenomenological equivalent.

In similar fashion, the family viewer employs the photograph both as a literal reference to the events depicted and as a stimulant to thoughts, associations, and memories related to the event. In this sense, as family members view and interpret their photographs, the iconic reference encodes the "totality" of the experience and assumes a metaphorical significance.

The meanings and significances associated with the home mode photograph are therefore not encoded or derived through any articulatable code. Rather, expression and significance are brought to and invested in the family photograph through the processes of interpretation. The use of this symbolic form thus constitutes a process of personal signification and attribution rather than communication and remains, to a large extent, idiosyncratic and inaccessible to others (cf. Worth and Gross 1979).

The use of the home mode seems heavily reliant on verbal accompaniment for the transmission of personal significances. Photographs presented to others are typically embedded in a verbal context delineating what should be attended to and what significances are located in the image, and providing contextual data necessary for understanding them. A certain degree of structural recognition may be provided for and recognized in the construction of albums or photographic series. These orderings may indicate temporal or spatial relations between the elements depicted, or even some general form of association. However, the placement of a photograph in the context of a family collection does not prescribe strategies for its interpretation as would the placement of a picture in a newspaper,
for example, where the photo is by convention treated as the simple documentation and representation of “objective realities.” As a meta-communicative context, the placement of the photograph in a family collection implies the investiture of personal significances and prescribes attributional strategies for interpretation; it does not provide the viewer with an explicit system of conventions and rules for decoding the home mode message form.

Family photography and the family photograph collections pose a number of problems for those who would understand them as documents of family life. Through knowledge of the social behaviors guiding their production and use, it would seem that they constitute conventionalized records of selected aspects of family life. But when viewers attempt to account for the ways in which home moders produce and interpret these images, it is frequently found that even the iconic references relevant to users cannot be deciphered from these photos (Figure 11, for example, is valued as a rare image of the woman reflected in the mirror, and Figure 12 is a record of snowmobile tracks, not a landscape). Similarly, viewers often cannot determine from a family photograph the range of contextual data necessary to interpret the events depicted, and they clearly cannot anticipate the range of significances attributed to the images by their users. As such, the researcher/viewer’s ability to interpret either denotative or connotative significance from the images of the home mode in and of themselves is sharply restricted. Further, the home mode photograph is not a document of fixed value in family life. Because interpretations are based in processes of recall, over time the power and value of these images may evolve and change or even be lost as memory decays (Figure 13). Thus photograph collections as documentary resources are perhaps more closely associated with an oral rather than a written tradition (cf. Goody and Watt 1962).

That the images of the home mode function in the storage and transmission of historical accounts and personal beliefs and experiences seems implicit from their use in daily life. However, what can be known from the photographs themselves seems clearly restricted, as any decoding scheme must account for the nature of the encoding process and the nature of subsequent usage. All too often, however, researchers—even those purportedly dealing only with iconic elements—overlook such matters as use, context, and social convention as well as the technical artifacts of the photographic process to make unwarranted inferences from these materials (Akeret 1973; Hill 1978; see also Chalfen 1975b for comment on Akeret). This research has suggested that, to the extent that researchers seek to understand the uses and meanings associated with these images (and the mode itself) by their users, they must locate them in the social con-
texts of their production and use. Home mode photography is a communicative activity, and its products, rather than being viewed simply as discrete articulations, might best be understood as communicative resources situated within and integrated with ongoing processes of social interaction.

Notes

1 Home mode photography can be defined as the body of still photographs and photographic transparencies produced and accumulated by and for family members within the context of family life. These images are made for private, as opposed to public or artistic, use and are to be distinguished from the latter primarily by the private context in which they are used rather than by any technical or formal quality of the images themselves.


3 There are numerous examples of this type of event, but they were found only in families for whom photography was an ongoing and established process fairly well integrated into the events and customs of family life. These include pictures of the first day of school and photographs of the entire family gathered on the same porch each year. One intriguing example encountered several times was the “last picture.” This was seen with groups of older people and groups who were close to an elderly person. They involved posing together at some regular interval in conscious anticipation that one of their number might die soon. The image would thereby serve as the last picture of that person and the original group.
4 Sandra Titus (1976) has suggested an interesting basis for these inequities in family shooting. She suggests that photographs are valuable to couples as they reflect and promote transition to parenthood through the display and reinforcement of appropriate role behaviors. Photographs taken with the first child are as such produced in a transitional period as the young couple adopt new roles. The couple may be expected to be increasingly acclimated to parental roles with successive children, as a result more pictures of the initial transition will be taken, and these will tend to show more images of parents holding and feeding the child as well as more individual photos of the child. I would add that such an interpretation can be readily extended to the photographic behaviors of new grandparents.

5 Rudisill (1971) has not only suggested that such a catalog of standard postures exists but states that they date from the introduction of photography to the public via the daguerreotype. At that point, he feels, Americans came to adopt a set of standard postures and approaches to the lens. What emerged was a “‘national iconography’”—a set of standard poses conforming to even as the subjects attested to the medium’s “‘absolute reality’” and “‘naturalness.’” That such a set of conventional poses exists now seems supported by the sample observed in this study. Such speculation should be subjected to a systematic and broad-based survey, however, before any attempt is made to suggest what these poses might be or how they might be classified.

6 The determination of when individuals edit and assemble their albums has significant ramifications for the nature of the family photograph album as a source of information about family life. Where albums are “‘built’” years after the photos were taken, people are probably reconstructing their past, and since memories associated with the images often fade as time passes, we may speculate that those which cannot be identified would not be included in the collections. Also, as will be discussed, a tendency to remove repetitive, bad, unfocused, or frivolous shots was identified in many families that have reedited or intend to reedit their collections. Thus albums put together in later years would be documents which are to some extent, sparser and of a different nature from those assembled continuously. Each type might well reflect a different set of criteria for inclusion and differing notions of what is significant and appropriate for storage and future use.

7 For a consideration of this variation and a presentation of case histories, see Musello (1977, chap. 5).

8 While the occasions of some photos are recalled over long periods of time with startling clarity, it was often found that a large part of any family’s viewing was spent identifying specific individuals, places, occasions, and events depicted in older photographs, and many were simply forgotten by their owners. Some informants suggested that these pictures were then “‘pointless’” or “‘meaningless’” to the makers. However, in general, the past meanings were transformed by present interpretations. In some instances it was found that, as specific identities and contextual information were lost—as in the case of a college prom, for example—attentions and attributions directed to the photograph were generalized and a more stereotypic significance was derived. The prom photos served less as pictures of specific friends, dates, and minute occurrences than as broader reminders of events and good times in college days.

Alternately, the approach to the images may become less metaphorical and more specifically referential. Viewers frequently directed their attention to the presence and nature of the artifacts of another time. Many took note of old clothes and cars in unidentified scenes or marveled at how homes were decorated or furnished in these “contextless” photographs. As such, many older pictures took on a new or differently weighted significance and were highly valued as representations of times past.

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- and John Adair
- and Larry Gross
My Favorite Foods are Dr Pepper, Collard Greens, and Pizza. I'm Sure I'll Be a Good Clown.

Phyllis Rogers

When you go to the circus you can always recognize the acrobats in the show by the kinds of acts they do. You can always distinguish the lion tamer from the elephant handler by the kinds of animals each goes into the ring with. Then the circus performers parade around in the spectacular processional with everyone aglitter in shimmering costumes, and you realize you can no longer tell who the lion tamer is and who the acrobat is because they are all wearing identical costumes and there are no cues to indicate their circus identities—except for one circus performer. No matter how he dresses you can always spot the clown. We, the audience, always recognize the clown no matter what he does, whether or not he makes us laugh; we recognize him because his greasepainted face tells us he is the clown.

Our insistence that the person in greasepaint is a clown has led to an interesting phenomenon in this country, the creation of something called the clown school. We do not have a circus school, where people are taught to be trapeze artists, animal trainers, or acrobats, but we do have a school that trains people as clowns. In an eight-week course young people are trained how to juggle, ride a unicycle, take slaps, take falls, and make a clown costume, but most important of all, how to make up as a clown.

For the past five years I have been studying the American circus clown for my doctoral dissertation in anthropology at Princeton University. In 1975-1976 I taught an eight-week course at Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey’s Clown College on the history of clowning, but I have spent most of the five years observing, talking to, listening to, and photographing circus clowns in their natural environment—the circus. When I first started my research, the students had not made headway into joining the smaller circuses in this country, but within the past four years they have been filtering out of the school into every clown Alley in this country (the Alley is the area where the clowns make up and congregate within the circus). We have reached a point at which most of the circus clowns we see performing have been trained in the clown school, yet we as an audience have taken no notice of it because we still see only the face of the clown. In its short life the school has changed more than the means by which a person enters the Alley; it has changed the face of the American circus clown.

In the old days of the circus in this country, which we will define as the time before Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey’s Combined Shows called it quits under canvas and went into arenas, anybody could be hired as a clown. All you had to do was walk up to the circus manager and ask for a job. Even if the show did not have any openings in the Alley, there was always something an able-bodied man was needed for. If the circus did need clowns, which more often than not it did, you were told to go to the Alley and ask for the Producing Clown; he would decide whether or not to give you a job.

When you found the Alley, you usually had to wait until a man or two wandered in, about an hour or so before the performance. The Producing Clown as well as the rest of the men in the Alley looked you over and decided if you would look good in makeup and which clown character would suit you best. All the while the men kept asking you questions about your circus experience: Could you juggle, had you ever applied clown makeup before, did you own any clown wardrobe, did you own any clown props? If you passed this first round of questions, it was decided that the clowns had to see what you looked like as a clown and if you were any good in the ring as a performer. One clown was chosen by the Producing Clown to make you up. First, this clown would study your face; he already knew about your lack of circus skills. If you seemed graceful, he would suggest a Joey makeup; this is the clown with the all-white face who usually wears the beautiful sequined costume. If you seemed the least bit gawky, he made you an Auguste, with the big red nose, baggy outfit, and big shoes. The old clowns preferred making you up as an Auguste because it used up less of their makeup. With a scrap of clothing from here and there the clowns constructed a makeshift costume while the Producing Clown figured out where he could best place you during a routine and which props, if any, he should let you use.

Once in the ring you discovered how chaotic and hectic three minutes (the set time for a clown routine) could be as you ducked pies and slaps, threw water and got wet, and grabbed balloons only to have them grabbed back. All the while the clown who made you up guided you through the routines, telling you what to do and when, and, most important, when to get out of the ring. At the end of the performance the Producing Clown told you whether this was your first or last performance. Some of the old clowns felt you were lucky if you were told to look for work elsewhere, because the hours were long, the work was hard, and the pay was bad.

Being given a job by the Producing Clown in no way meant that you were accepted into the Alley. That entire first season you were called a "First of May," a circus term designating not quite an outsider, but then again not a full member of the circus either. This year-

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long limbo was difficult for many of the newcomers to accept, with the result that they left the show during their first season. For those who stayed the struggle had just begun.

When an untrained person was admitted into the Alley, he was given the bare essentials in make up and wardrobe. After the initial lesson he was more or less on his own. These First of Mays quickly sensed that they had better come up with some kind of suitable face or they would be asked to leave. They also learned that the last thing a First of May could do was watch one of the older men make up. Your face was your fortune, and to copy another man's face was plagiarism. Any number of his makeup was theft, punishable by ostracism.

Every man had some kind of special trick which made his makeup look perfect, and these secrets were jealously guarded. In this world such secrets meant job security. It might take years before a new man felt confident about his face, but the management expected a clown's face to form the first day he worked with them.

When Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey's Combined Shows decided to split its circus into two equally entertaining shows, it naturally required twice as many performers. The show's agents had relatively little trouble scouting for new acrobatic acts, new trapeze acts, new elephants, new cat acts, and new show girls; they did have trouble finding new clowns. The talent scouts were finding a ragtag assortment of men working in the Alleys of various circuses across the country, almost none of whom met the standard of excellence RBB&B set for its clowns. Most of the men were old, their wardrobes were shabby, their makeup was none too pretty, their routines were none too funny, and RBB&B felt that their life-styles were none too wholesome. Since the show desperately needed more clowns, the show hired as many clowns as it felt were salvageable, but Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey's Combined Shows did not have nearly as many people in the Alley as it wanted, nor did the clowns look quite as good as RBB&B had expected.

In 1968 Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey's Circus opened the doors of its Winter Quarters to the first class of students in the clown school. There were several reasons for the creation of the school. First, RBB&B felt that the art of clowning was currently dominated by old men; the school, it felt, would bring youth and vitality to the art of clowning. Then, for the first time, women and minority group members were actively recruited into clown Alley. Finally, the school would be a source of clowns for RBB&B's Alley, and these clowns would look, dress, and perform exactly as the Big One wanted its clowns to.

When the school first started, it is true to say there were not many clowns in this country, but throughout American circus history there have never been many clowns and those who are in the Alley were never children. There were still quite a few old men in RBB&B's Alley when the school started, but the Alley was not to remain the bastion of the old clown for long. As the years passed, the school produced more and more students who eventually replaced the old men. As the old clowns moved out of RBB&B's Alley, they entered the ranks of the performers in the tented circuses throughout this country, but they were not to remain there for long either. Each year the school continued to produce more students than it needed, creating a glut on the market. Soon there were students asking for jobs at the smaller shows, undercutting the false security of the old clowns. The students would not only add youth and vitality to the Alleys of these small shows; they would work for less money than the old clowns. Obviously it was to the circuses' advantage to hire the student clowns—after all, they were getting two for the price of one old clown. Soon the clown school graduates began to replace the old clowns in just about every circus in the country. There is a great deal of animosity in the old clowns who lost their jobs to the students. "You can't make somebody a clown!" the old clowns say. "Just because you have a pretty face, that don't make you a clown."

What does make you a clown? The old clowns feel that the quickest and easiest way for a person to distinguish between a clown and a person in makeup is the clown's ability to make his face move. There is no way to tell who will have this ability; for instance, a youngster who has been in the school a few weeks can display the trait, while an old man who has been clowning for over forty years will not have that skill. This example is the exception rather than the rule because more of the old men than the young people possess the trait. Could this be because the old men have more wrinkles, or does it reflect the fact that when the old men entered clowning they were given enough time to experiment with their faces until they found the one that was uniquely their own? Or could it possibly be that because there are so few old men left clowning those with the ability to move their faces stand out, making their impact greater than their actual numbers?

Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey's Circus knew that the faces, more than any other aspect, of their clown students had to be perfect. So, for the first several years of the program the old clowns from the Alley were brought to the school to instruct the students how to apply a face. The first three photographs show a clown student under the direction of an old clown. The first photograph (Figure 1) is a straight-on shot of the made-up face. This makes for a nice picture which says "clown" to the audience. The second photograph (Figure 2) shows the student staring intently into a mirror under the watchful eye of an old clown. In the third (Figure 3), he is trying to get her to move her mouth; she is trying very hard to produce some movement. Note the similarities in the second
and third photographs: look very closely at the student's face in both photographs and then look at her neck. See how much she is straining to get some movement in her face in the last photograph, but her mouth in the last two photographs is virtually the same.

The fourth photograph (Figure 4) is a none too flattering portrait of a student out of makeup. This shot was taken to show her basic facial musculature. Note her arched eyebrows, the lines defining her cheeks that help to accentuate her smile. The next photograph is the same student in makeup—quite a pretty face (Figure 5). Look again at the preceding photograph. See where her cheek definition is, where the eyebrows arch, and the musculature of her forehead. Now look at her made-up face again. Where has she placed her cheek makeup? Does the area of makeup coincide with the movement in her cheeks? Observe where she has placed her greasepaint eyebrows. Will they cover the musculature of her forehead? Does her painted mouth fit into her mouth lines? When you compare the student's unmade-up face with her clown face, you can see that she has not totally utilized her facial musculature; that is, she has not used her real face to help her create her clown face.

The student in the next two photographs looks a little goofy, but look carefully at the photograph of his unmade-up face (Figure 6). See the deep lines around his mouth, the sides of his nose; see how the lines define his cheeks and how they cross his forehead. In the photograph of his clown face (Figure 7), see how well he has utilized his facial musculature. When you look at his unmade-up face after seeing his clown face, you feel as if you can almost see his clown face in his naked face.

Figures 8 and 9 show the two students from the preceding series of prints along with another student. We see that the new student's face is in striking contrast to those of her fellow students. The new student has more areas of white showing in her face, but if we look closely we note that she has almost as many markings on her face as the student in the middle of the photograph. The face of the student on the left seems more bare to us because most of her markings are horizontal, thereby blending them into her face. In Figure 8 the students are all smiling. They were then requested to move their mouths, the results of which are seen in Figure 9. But look at the difference in expression in the two prints. The student on the left has opened her mouth in the second of the photographs, but her eyebrows are as high as they were in the previous print. Her eyes don't appear to have opened any wider, and there has been no change in the white areas of her face. The student in the middle has made her eyes appear more open because as she extended her mouth downward she raised her eyebrows, utilizing the vertical markings above and below her pupils. Even though she has elongated her mouth, she has retained the same smiling expression she exhibited in the first of these two prints. The student on the right has drastically altered his appearance in the second photograph by the simple gesture of moving his mouth. Within a matter of seconds he has transformed himself from a smiling, happy clown to an unhappy one. Not only has his mouth changed expression, so have his eyes.

All four students in this first grouping of photographs put on their first clown makeup when they attended the clown school. All had the same clown instructors, all had the same number of hours in makeup class; yet only one student could change expression, or, as the old clowns call it, move his face. Why?

The old clowns say that anyone can apply greasepaint to his face but very few practitioners of the art of clowning ever acquire the skill to make their faces move. The next series of photographs is of an old clown. His character is called a Joey, or the White Face Clown. His makeup is of the same genre of the students in the first grouping of photographs who could not make their faces move. In the first of the three photographs (Figure 10) the old clown is holding his face expressionless. We can see that his makeup is as stark as that of the student on the left in the series of the three students changing expression, and that he, like her, has black horizontal lines beside his eyes. His mouth is heavily outlined on the bottom lip while the top lip is lined as a woman would line her mouth with lipstick. Contrast this with the upper lips of the three Joeys in the previously presented photographs. He has blackened the area of his lids, just above the eye itself, rather than placing his clown eyebrows above his real ones or on his forehead, or even to the point of having totally excluded them from his face. Finally, note that the line he has drawn from the triangle shapes just under his eyes gently curve down the outer perimeter of his face. In the next photograph (Figure 11) the old Joey is smiling; even though his eyes are almost closed, they are still highly visible. The triangles are smaller under his eyes and the lines have become more rounded. Contrast the last photograph (Figure 12) of this grouping, in which the old clown is registering surprise, with the first two photographs of this grouping. His mouth has become a black hole, the horizontal lines opposite his eyes are highly visible, and his eyes are wider and have become longer, but most noticeable is the fact that the curved lines down his face are now straight. With a simple gesture of his face he has been able to create two distinct expressions with his face.

The clown in the last two photographs (Figures 13 and 14) of this portfolio is an Auguste, the same clown character as is the student who could make his face move. This old clown has been called the greatest living clown in the American circus. Even though he has not finished applying his makeup, he is able to demonstrate a remarkable versatility with the movement of
his mouth. The first photograph has him smiling broadly; the next face is dismayed. The shape of his mouth has changed from being broad and open to being stretched and shaped like a dog biscuit—a dramatic and drastic change in a matter of a second.

There has always been a place in the circus for the pretty clown face; such clowns are called picture clowns. Most of these clowns are the ones who beam down on us from circus posters. You may ask why I am making such a point of a clown’s ability to move his face if it isn’t necessary for all clowns to do it. Ten or fifteen years ago there were many more clowns performing in circuses who were able to move their faces; now there are very few clowns who can do it. It would seem that as the old men leave the circus they take their skill away with them. It is not necessary now, nor has it ever been before, for every clown to be able to move his face, but for those clowns who wanted to be most effective in the ring it was an invaluable aid. How else could the audience see a change in expression from the last row under the big top? Not every man in makeup in the old days was a good clown, but those who were made our infrequent visits to the circus memorable. According to the old clowns, those clowns with the ability to change expression were best able to make the audience laugh, and, after all, clowns are supposed to make us laugh.

When the circus school opened its doors, the media rang the death knell for clowning. They envisioned Ronald McDonald-type clowns entertaining us in circuses, but ten years have proved them wrong in their analysis of the school’s effect on clowning. Since the school’s inception, there have been more and more young people entering the profession as well as women and minority group members entering the ring. This was a goal of the school and one at which they have succeeded. The school has also been more than successful in populating the Alleys of this country. Where once a handful of people would apply to a circus ad for clowns, there are now dozens who apply and hundreds who know how to apply a clown face and who can look and dress like a clown. That is all we as an audience really care about: If a person looks like a clown, then he must be a clown. The next time you go to a circus look and see if the clowns can make their faces move; or is the American circus clown you’re seeing just another pretty face?
I'm Sure I'll be a Good Clown
I'm Sure I'll be a Good Clown
I'm Sure I'll be a Good Clown
I'm Sure I'll be a Good Clown
Aesthetics as Activity

Aestheticians study the premises and arguments people use to justify classifying things and activities as "beautiful," "artistic," "art," "not-art," "good art," "bad art," and so on. They construct systems with which to make and justify such classifications as well as specific instances of their application. Critics apply aesthetic systems to specific art works and arrive at judgments of their worth and explications of what gives them that worth.

In this view aesthetics is an activity rather than a body of doctrine. Aestheticians are not the only people who engage in this activity. Most participants in art worlds make aesthetic judgments frequently. Aesthetic principles, arguments, and judgments make up an important part of the body of conventions by means of which members of art worlds act together. Creating an explicit aesthetic may precede, follow, or be simultaneous with developing the techniques, forms, and works which make up the art world's output, and it may be done by any of the participants in that world. Sometimes artists themselves formulate the aesthetic explicitly, although they often develop it only implicitly through their continuing, daily choices of materials and forms.

In complex and highly developed art worlds, specialized professionals—critics and philosophers—create logically organized and philosophically defensible aesthetic systems, and the creation of aesthetic systems can become a major industry in its own right. An aesthetician whose language foreshadows a sociologically based system I will examine below describes what aestheticians do:

Being a member of the Institution of Art . . . does not presuppose any explicit knowledge of the constitutional and regulative rules of the Institution. To find and formulate these is the job of a special kind of officers of the Institution, the aestheticians or philosophers of art, at least if aesthetics is conceived in the modern way as the philosophical discipline that deals with the concepts we use when we talk about, think about or in other ways "handle" works of art. On the basis of their own understanding of the Institution of Art as a whole, it is the task of aestheticians to analyze the ways all the different persons and groups talk and act as members of the Institution, and through this to see which are the actual rules that make up the logical framework of the Institution and according to which the procedures within the Institution take place. . . .

Within the Institution of Art specific statements of fact—results of a correctly performed elucidation and interpretation of a work of art, say—entail specific evaluations. Consutive rules lay down specific criteria of evaluation that are binding for members of the Institution. [Kjørup 1976:47–48]

We need not believe that it works so neatly to see that art world participants understand the role of aestheticians and aesthetics this way.

An art world has many uses for an explicit aesthetic system. It ties the activities of participants to the traditions of the art, justifying their demands for the resources and advantages ordinarily available to people who produce that kind of art. To be specific, if I can argue cogently that jazz merits as serious consideration on aesthetic grounds as other forms of art music, then as a jazz player I can compete for grants and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and faculty positions in music schools, perform in the same halls as symphony orchestras, and require the same attention to the nuances of my work as the most "serious" classical composer or performer. An aesthetic shows that, on general grounds successfully argued to be valid, what art world members do belongs to the same class as other activities already enjoying the advantages of being "art."

A well-argued and successfully defended aesthetic also guides working participants in the production of specific art works. Among the things they keep in mind in making the innumerable small decisions that cumulatively shape the work are whether and how those decisions might be defended on general grounds. Of course, working artists do not refer every small problem to its most general philosophical grounding to decide how to deal with it, but they know when their decisions run afoul of such theories, if only through a vague sense of something "wrong." A general aesthetic comes into play more explicitly when someone suggests a major change in conventional practice. If, as a jazz player, I want to give up the conventional twelve- and thirty-two bar formats in which improvising has traditionally taken place in favor of those in which the length of phrases and sections is among the elements to be improvised, then I need a defensible explanation of why such a change should be made.

A coherent and defensible aesthetic, further, can help stabilize values and thus regularize practice. Stabilizing value is not just a philosophical exercise; I am not talking about value in the ordinary sociological sense, but rather about attributes and objects people find valuable. Art world participants who agree on a work's value can act toward it in roughly similar ways. An aesthetic providing a basis on which people can assign the same value to things in a reliable and dependable way makes regular patterns of cooperation possible. When values are stable, and can be depended on to be stable, other things stabilize as well:

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the monetary value of works and thus the business arrangements on which the art world runs, the reputations of artists and collectors, and the worth of institutional and personal collections. The aesthetic created by aestheticians justifies the selections of collectors by providing a theoretical rationale for their activity.

From this point of view, aesthetic value arises out of a consensus of the participants in an art world. Without that consensus, or just to the degree that one does not exist, value does not exist in any sociologically meaningful sense. (By this I do not suggest a sociological imperialism over theories of value, but rather the notion that judgments of value not held jointly by members of an art world cannot provide the basis for collective activity which assumes those judgments, and thus do not affect their activities significantly, if at all.) A work is deemed good, therefore valuable, through the achievement of consensus about the basis on which it is to be judged and through the application of the agreed-on aesthetic principles to the particular case.

But many styles and schools compete for attention within an organized art world, demanding that their works be shown, published, or performed in place of those produced by adherents of other styles and schools. Since the art world's distribution system has a finite capacity, all works and schools cannot be presented by it and thus be eligible for the rewards and advantages of presentation. Groups compete for access to those rewards, among other ways, by logical argument proving why they merit presentation. Logical analysis seldom settles arguments over the allocation of resources, but participants in art worlds, and especially the people who control access to distribution channels, often feel that what they do must be logically defensible. The heat arising in discussions of aesthetics usually occurs because what is being decided is not only an abstract philosophical question but also an allocation of valuable resources. Whether jazz is "really" music or photography "really" art, whether free-form jazz is "really" jazz and therefore music or fashion photographs are "really" photography and therefore art are in part discussions about whether people who play free-form jazz can perform in jazz clubs for the already existing jazz audience and whether fashion photographs can be exhibited and sold in important galleries and museums.

Aestheticians, then, provide that element in the battle for recognition of particular styles and schools which consists of making the arguments to convince other participants in an art world that the work deserves, on logically argued grounds, inclusion within whatever categories that world concerns itself with. The conservatism of art worlds, arising out of the way conventional practices cluster in neatly meshed packages of mutually adjusted activities, materials, and places, means that changes will not find an easy reception. Most changes proposed to participants in art worlds are minor, leaving untouched most of the ways things are conventionally done. The world of symphonic music, for instance, has not changed the length of concert programs very much in recent years, for the very good reason that, because of union agreements, it would increase their costs to lengthen the programs and, because audiences expect eighty or ninety minutes of music for the price of a ticket, they dare not shorten them very much. (That was not always the case. Probably as a result of the unionization of musicians, among other things, concert programs have shortened appreciably since, say, Beethoven's time, when one concert, for instance, contained two symphonies, a piano concerto, a concert aria and duet for voices, and a period of Beethoven improvising on the piano [Forbes 1970:255].) Nor has the basic instrumentation of the orchestra changed, nor have the tonal materials used (i.e., the conventional tempered chromatic scale), nor the places in which the music is presented. Because of all these conservative pressures, someone must make a strong argument if some substantially new practice, even a minor one, is to infiltrate an existing art world.

Readers of aesthetic works cannot fail to notice the moralistic tone of the writing. Aestheticians take it for granted that their job is to find a foolproof formula by which things which do not deserve to be called art are weeded out from the works which have earned that honorific title. I emphasize "deserve" and "earn" because aesthetic writing insists on a real moral difference between art and not-art. Aestheticians do not intend simply to classify things into useful categories, as we might classify species of plants, but rather to separate the deserving from the undeserving, and to do it definitively. They do not want to take an inclusive approach to art, counting in everything that might conceivably add interest or value; they take an exclusionary position, rather, looking for a defensible line of reasoning to validate the omission of unworthy work. The nature of the enterprise—the bestowing of honorific titles—requires them to rule some things out, for there is no special honor in a title every conceivable object or activity is entitled to. Since bestowing the title "art" involves moral elements, aestheticians emphasize a foolproof formula; ideally, there should be no ambiguous cases. That aesthetic positions frequently emerge in the course of fighting for the acceptance of something new does not alter the situation. Such positions, too, need to show that some things are not-art in order to justify the claim that something else is. Aesthetics which declare that everything is art do not satisfy people who create or use them in the life of an art world.
Aesthetics and Organization

The rest of what aestheticians and critics do is to provide a running revision of the value-creating theory, which, in the form of criticism, continuously adapts the premises of the theory to the works artists actually produce. Artists produce new work in response not only to the considerations of formal aesthetics but also to the traditions of the art worlds in which they participate—traditions profitably viewed (Kubler 1962) as sequences of problem definitions and solutions; in response to suggestions implicit in other traditions, as in the influence of African art on Western painting; in response to the possibilities contained in new technical developments; and so on. But an existing aesthetic needs to be kept up to date so that it continues to validate logically what has become important art work in the experience of audiences, and thus keeping the connection between what has already been validated and what is now being proposed alive and consistent.

Since aesthetic principles and systems are part of the package of interdependent practices that make up an art world, they will both influence and be influenced by such aspects of it as the organization of training of potential artists and viewers, the organization of financial and other modes of support, and the modes of distribution and presentation of works. They will especially be influenced by a strain toward consistency that is implicit in the idea of "art."

"Art" is too crude a concept to capture what is at work in these situations. Like other complex concepts, it really is a generalization about the nature of reality, although somewhat disguised. When we try to define it, we find many anomalous cases—cases which meet some, but not all, of the criteria implied or expressed by the concept. In the case of art, we usually mean and understand something like this, at a minimum: a work possessed of aesthetic value, however that is defined; a work justified by a coherent and defensible aesthetic; a work recognized by appropriate people as having that kind of value; a work displayed in appropriate places (hung in museums, played at concerts). In many instances, however, works have some, but not all, of these attributes. They are exhibited and valued but either do not have aesthetic value or have aesthetic value but are not exhibited and valued by the right people. The concept of art suggests that we will find all these things co-occurring in the real world; when they do not co-occur we have the definitional troubles which have always plagued the concept of art. I will return to this problem later when I consider the institutional theory of art.

One reason for the mutual influence between aesthetic theories and the organizations that make up an art world is that some people in art worlds try to minimize these inconsistencies by bringing theory and practice into line so that there are fewer anomalous cases; others, who wish to upset the status quo, of course insist on the anomalies. To illustrate the point, consider this question: How many great (or excellent or good) works of art are there? I myself am not concerned with fixing a number, nor do I think that the number (however we might calculate it) is important. But looking at that question will make clear those influences.

In 1975, Bill Arnold organized "The Bus Show," an exhibition of photographs to be displayed on 500 New York City buses (Carlson and Arnold 1978). He intended by this means "to present excellent photographs in a public space" and thus to a much larger audience than it ordinarily reaches and to allow many more photographers' work to be seen than would ordinarily be the case. The photographs were to be displayed in the space ordinarily used for advertising; to fill the advertising space on one bus required seventeen photographs of varying sizes, from nine to sixteen inches in height. To fill 500 buses thus required 8,500 photographs. Arnold intended all of them to be current work by contemporary photographers.

Are there actually 8,500 "excellent" contemporary photographs which merit that kind of public display? Asking that question presupposes an aesthetic and a critical position from which we could evaluate photographs, deciding which ones were or were not of sufficiently high quality. Without attempting to specify the content of such an aesthetic, imagine a simplified case. Suppose that quality is a unidimensional attribute so that we can rank all photographs as having more or less of it. (In reality, we would find that competent members of the art photography world, even those who belong to one of its many competing segments, use a large and varied assortment of dimensions in judging photographs.) We can then easily tell whether any photograph is better, worse, or equal to any other. But we would still not know how many of them were worthy of public display, how many merited being called "great" or "excellent" or "beautiful," and how many were worthy being included in a museum collection or listed in a comprehensive history of art photography.

To make those judgments requires establishing a necessarily arbitrary cutoff point. Even if we decide that a substantial "break" at some point in an otherwise smooth distribution makes it easy to see a major difference on either side of it, to use such a break as the cutting point would be practically justifiable but logically arbitrary. But aesthetic systems propose and justify such judgments and divisions of existing art works all the time. In fact, the "Bus Show" shocked people by its implication that the line could justifiably be drawn where it would have to be drawn in order to fill all 500 buses, and not where it would be more conventionally drawn (if we wanted to have a show of the best in contemporary photography, we would find our-
If aesthetic systems justify dividing art works into those worthy of display or performance and those not, that will influence and be influenced by the institutions and organizations in which such displays and performances occur. Institutions have some flexibility in the amount of work they can present to the public, but not much. Existing facilities (concert halls, art galleries and museums, libraries) have finite amounts of space; existing canons of taste limit the use to which that space can be put (we no longer feel it appropriate to hang paintings floor to ceiling in the manner of the Paris Salon); and audience expectations and conventionalized attention spans impose further limits (more music could be performed if audiences were used to sitting through six-hour instead of two-hour concerts, although the financial problems, given current union wage scales, would make that impossible anyway). Existing facilities can always be expanded, but at any particular time there is only so much space or time, and only so many works can therefore be displayed.

The aesthetic of the world which has such facilities at its disposal can fix the point on our hypothetical one dimension of quality so as to produce just the number of works for which there is exhibition space. It can fix the standard so that there are fewer works to be displayed or rewarded than there is room for (something of this sort happens when a prize-awarding committee decides that no work is worthy of a prize that year). Or it can fix the standard so that many more works are judged adequate than there is room for. Either of the latter two situations produces difficulties, throwing into doubt the adequacy of the art world's institutional apparatus, the validity of its aesthetic, or both. There is, thus, some pressure for the aesthetic to operate on a standard flexible enough to produce approximately the amount of work for which the organizations have room and, conversely, for the institutions to generate the amount of exhibition opportunity required by the works the aesthetic certifies as being of the appropriate quality. These numbers come into further rough agreement when artists devote themselves to work for which there is room, withdrawing their effort from media and formats which are "filled up."

When new styles of art emerge they compete for available space, in part by proposing new aesthetic standards according to which their work merits space in existing facilities. They also create new facilities for display, as in the case of the "Bus Show." Art worlds differ in their flexibility, in the ease with which they can enlarge the number of works which can easily be made available for public inspection in conventional facilities. Modern societies have relatively little trouble accommodating vast amounts of printed material in libraries (although not in easily accessible bookstores [Newman 1973]). Music can similarly be distributed in recorded performances in large amounts. But live performances of musical works of various kinds have so few outlets that it becomes reasonable for people to begin to compose music solely for recording, even to the extent of relying on effects which cannot be produced live, but require the mechanisms of an elaborately outfitted recording studio.

If aesthetic systems in fact move flexibly so as to continue to have the relationship I have just described with the mechanisms of distribution which characterize an art world, then even the most absolute of them, those which most resolutely draw a strict line between "art" and "not-art," have in practice a kind of relativism which defeats that aim. The problem so created is spoken to in an interesting way by the institutional theory of aesthetics.

An Institutional Theory of Aesthetics

This paper, focusing as it does on questions of social organization, does not attempt to develop a sociologically based theory of aesthetics. In fact, from the perspective just sketched of the role of aesthetics in art worlds, it is clear that an aesthetic developed in the world of sociology would be an idle exercise, since only aesthetics developed in connection with the operations of art worlds are likely to have much influence in them. (See Gans 1974 for an interesting attempt by a sociologist to develop an aesthetic, especially in relation to the question of the aesthetic value of mass media works.) Ironically enough, a number of philosophers have produced a theory that, if not sociological, is sufficiently based on sociological considerations to let us see what such an aesthetic might look like. Worth inspection on that account alone, analysis of its premises and of the problems that have arisen in connection with it will also clarify some issues considered earlier.

Textbooks in aesthetics typically distinguish and describe several differing, sometimes contradictory, theories by which one can decide what is art, what is not, what is beautiful, what is not. The coexistence of these theories in the texts is not at all surprising, indicating that no one has demonstrated finally, to universal satisfaction, a foolproof way of making those distinctions and that aesthetic theories, like ethical theories, continue to be debated. We might expect what is roughly true, that new theories—rivaling, extending, or amending previous ones—arise when older theories fail to give an adequate account of the virtues of some work which has been widely accepted by knowledgeable members of the relevant art world. When an aesthetic theory cannot legitimate logically what is already legitimate in other ways, someone will construct the theory that does legitimate it. (What I say here should be understood as pseudohistory, in-
Dicating in a narrative form some relationships which may or may not have arisen exactly as I say they did.)

Thus, putting it crudely, for a long time works of visual art could be judged on the basis of an imitation theory, according to which the object of visual art was to imitate nature. At some point that theory no longer explained well-regarded new works of art—Monet’s haystacks and cathedrals, for instance, even if they were rationalized as experiments in capturing the relationship between light and color, or Van Gogh’s late works. A theory of art as expression then found the virtues of works to reside in their ability to express and communicate the emotions, ideas, and personalities of the artists who made them. That theory in turn had to be repaired or replaced so that it might deal with geometric abstraction, action painting, and other works that could not be understood in those terms—just as neither theory nor their analogs would be able to say anything useful about aleatory music, for instance.

The institutional theory aims to solve the problems raised by works that outrage both commonsense and finer sensibilities by showing no trace of the artist at all, either in skill or intention. Institutional theorists concern themselves with works like the urinal or the snow shovel exhibited by Marcel Duchamp, their only claim to being art apparently lying in Duchamp’s signature on them, or the Brillo boxes constructed and exhibited by Andy Warhol. The commonsense critique of these works is that anyone could have done them, that they require no skill or insight, that they do not imitate anything in nature because they are nature, that they do not express anything interesting because they are no more than commonplace objects. The critique of those with finer sensibilities is much the same.

Nevertheless, those very works gained great renown in the world of contemporary visual art, inspiring many more works like them. Confronted by this fait accompli, aestheticians acted boldly to develop a theory that placed the artistic character and quality of the work outside the physical art object itself. They found those qualities, instead, in the relation of the objects to an existing art world, to those institutions and organizations in which art was produced, distributed, appreciated, and discussed.

Arthur Danto and George Dickie have presented the most important statements of this theory. Danto concerned himself with the essence of art, with what in the relation between object and art world made that object art. In his famous statement of the problem, he said:

To see something as art requires something the eye cannot descry—an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld. [Danto 1964:580]

The theory out of which the idea of making the Brillo box arose, the relation of that idea to other ideas about what makes art works art and to other objects those works inspired—all of these create a context in which the making of the Brillo box and the box itself become art exactly because that context gives them that sort of meaning. In another version:

The moment something is considered an artwork, it becomes subject to an interpretation. It owes its existence as an artwork to this, and when its claim to art is defeated, it loses its interpretation and becomes a mere thing. The interpretation is in some measure a function of the artistic context of the work: it means something different depending on its art-historical location, its antecedents, and the like. And as an artwork, finally, it acquires a structure which an object photographically similar to it is simply disqualified from sustaining if it is a real thing. Art exists in an atmosphere of interpretation and an artwork is thus a vehicle of interpretation. [Danto 1973:15]

Dickie deals with the organizational forms and mechanisms. According to his perfected definition:

A work of art in the classificatory sense is (1) an artifact, (2) a set of the aspects of which has had conferred upon it the status of candidate for appreciation by some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld). [Dickie 1975:34]

A sizable and interesting secondary literature has grown up around this point of view, criticizing and amplifying it (Cohen 1973; Sclafani 1973a and b; Blizek 1974; Danto 1974; Mitias 1975; Silvers 1976). Sociologists will undoubtedly see a family resemblance between the institutional theory of art and the various sociological theories that make their subject matter the way social definitions create reality (e.g., the so-called labeling theory of deviance), for both make the character of their subject matter depend on the way people acting collectively define that character.

There is a difference, however, and not a surprising one. Philosophers tend to argue from hypothetical examples and with stripped-down references to reality. Thus, the “artworld” referred to by Dickie and Danto does not have a great deal of meat on its bones, only what is minimally necessary to make the points they want to make, and the criticisms made of their positions do not make much reference to the character of existing art worlds or ones which have existed, but rather to matters of logical consistency in the constructs used in the theory. None of the participants in these discussions develop as organizationally complicated a conception of what an art world is as I have elsewhere (Becker 1974, 1975, 1976, 1978, 1979), although I do not think my description is incompatible with their arguments. If we make use of a more extended and empirically based notion of what an art world is, however, we can make headway on some
problems the philosophical discussion has bogged down in, thus perhaps being helpful to aestheticians while simultaneously deepening our own analysis.

Who? Who can confer on something the status of candidate for appreciation, and thus ratify it as art? What person or persons can act on behalf of that certain social institution, the art world? Dickie settles this question boldly. He describes the art world as having core personnel:

... a loosely organized, but nevertheless related, set of persons including artists... producers, museum directors, museum-goers, theater-goers, reporters for newspapers, critics for publications of all sorts, art historians, art theorists, philosophers of art, and others. These are the people who keep the machinery of the artworld working and thereby provide for its continuing existence. [Dickie 1975:35-36]

But he also insists:

In addition, every person who sees himself as a member of the artworld is thereby a member. [Ibid.]

That last sentence, of course, alerts aestheticians; Dickie’s approach will probably not satisfy their feeling that it is necessary to be able to distinguish the deserving from the undeserving and this definition is therefore going to be too broad. They cannot accept the implication of Dickie’s remark, which is that the representatives of the art world who will be conferring the honorific status of art on objects are self-appointed, and express their discontent in a rash of humorous examples. What if a zookeeper decides that he is a member of the art world and, in that capacity, confers the status of candidate for appreciation, and thus of art work, on the elephant he tends? That could not really make the elephant a work of art, could it? Because, after all, the zookeeper really could not act on behalf of the art world, could he? We all know the answers: The elephant just isn’t an art work (Dickie 1971; Blizek 1974).

But how do we know that? We know it because we have a commonsense understanding of the organization of art worlds. A relevant feature of organized art worlds is that, however their position is justified, some people are commonly seen by many or most interested parties as being more entitled to speak on behalf of the art world than others; the entitlement stems from their being recognized by the other participants in the cooperative activities through which that world’s works are produced and consumed as people who are entitled to do that. Whether other art world members accept these people as capable of deciding what art is because they have more experience, because they have an innate gift for recognizing art, or simply because they are, after all, the people who are in charge of such things and therefore ought to know—whatever the reason, what gives them the ability to make the distinction and make it stick is that the other participants agree that they should be allowed to do it and that this agreement is one of the routine and interdependent activities that make up the art world.

Sociological analysts need not decide who is entitled to decide that things are art (or, to use Dickie’s language, to confer the status of candidate for appreciation). We need only observe which people members of the art world treat as capable of doing that and allow to do it, in the sense that once those people have decided something is art, the others act as though it were in whatever ways might be appropriate.

Some common observations made in art worlds show that the philosophical desire to be able to make definitive distinctions between art and non-art objects cannot be satisfied by the institutional theory. For one thing, there is seldom complete agreement on who is entitled to speak on behalf of the art world as a whole. Some people occupy institutional positions which give them the de facto right to decide what will be acceptable. Museum directors, for instance, had the power to decide whether photography was an art because they could decide whether or not to exhibit photographs in their museums. They even had the power to decide what kind of art (e.g., “minor” or whatever the opposite of that is) photography was by deciding whether photographs would be exhibited in the main galleries in which paintings were ordinarily exhibited or whether they would be confined to a special place with less prestige in which only photographs were shown. But some people might argue that museum directors are incompetent to make the judgments they do make, that in a better world they would not be allowed to make such judgments because they are ignorant, prejudiced, and influenced by extraneous considerations. Some might think they are too avant-garde and do not give proper attention to established styles and genres; others, just the opposite (Haacke 1976, passim).

Art world members also disagree over whether the decisions of occupants of certain positions really make any difference; this disagreement reflects their ambiguous position in the art world. It is frequently not clear whether a particular critic’s decision has any consequences or whether the activities of others will be conditioned by that decision; very often that will depend on a variety of contingencies arising from political shifts and struggles within the art world. Insofar as art world members find this process ambiguous, the status of such people as critics, dealers, and members of prize and fellowship committees will likewise be ambiguous, as will the status of whatever pronouncements they make. The ambiguity is not remediable by philosophic or social analysis; it exists because the people whose deference would ratify the status defer sporadically and erratically.
Thus, we cannot make the all-or-nothing judgments aestheticians would like to make about whether works are or are not art. Since the degree of consensus about who can decide what art is will vary greatly from one situation to another, a realistic view reflects that uncertainty by allowing "art-ness," whether or not an object is art, to be a continuous variable rather than an all-or-nothing dichotomy.

Similarly, we can see that art worlds vary in the kinds of activities carried on by their members that embody and ratify the assigning of the status of art to an object or event. On the one hand, material benefits, such as the award of fellowships, prizes, commissions, display space, and other exhibition opportunities (publication, production, etc.), have the immediate consequence of helping the artist to continue producing work. On the other hand, such intangible benefits as being taken seriously by the more knowledgeable members of the art world have indirect but important consequences for artistic careers, placing the recipient in the flow of ideas in which change and development take place in the world's concerns and providing day-to-day validation of work concerns and help with daily problems—rewards denied those who are merely successful in more conventional career terms.

What? What characteristics must an object have to be a work of art? The institutional theory suggests that anything might be capable of appreciation. In fact, in response to a critic who says that some objects—"ordinary thumbtacks, cheap white envelopes, the plastic forks given at some drive-in restaurants"—just cannot be appreciated (Cohen 1973: 78), Dickie says:

But why cannot the ordinary qualities of Fountain [the urinal Duchamp exhibited as a work of art]—its gleaming white surface, the depth revealed when it reflects images of surrounding objects, its pleasing oval shape—be appreciated. It has qualities similar to those of works by Brancusi and Moore which many do not balk at saying they appreciate. Similarly, thumbtacks, envelopes, and plastic forks have qualities that can be appreciated if one makes the effort to focus attention on them. One of the values of photography is its ability to focus on and bring out the qualities of quite ordinary objects. And the same sort of thing can be done without the benefit of photography just by looking. [Dickie 1975: 42]

Can anything at all be turned into art, just by someone's saying so?

... it cannot be this simple: even if in the end it is successful christening which makes an object art, not every attempt at christening is successful. There are bound to be conditions to be met both by the namer and the thing to be named, and if they are completely unsatisfied, then saying 'I christen... ' will not be to christen. [Cohen 1973: 80]

Cohen is right: not every attempt to label something art is successful. But it does not follow that there are, accordingly, some constraints on the nature of the object or event itself which make certain objects ipso facto not art and incapable of being redefined in that way.

The constraints that undoubtedly exist in any specific art world on what can be defined as art arise from a prior consensus on what kinds of standards will be applied, and by whom, in making those judgments. Art world members characteristically, despite all their doctrinal and other differences, produce quite reliable judgments about which artists and works are serious and therefore worthy of attention. Thus, jazz players who disagree over stylistic preferences can nevertheless agree on whether a given performer or performance "swings," and theater people likewise make quite reliable judgments of whether a particular scene "works." Artists may disagree violently over which works and their makers should receive support, and marginal cases (especially those in styles just being incorporated into the conventional practice of the art world or those on the verge of being thrown out as no longer worthy of serious consideration) will provoke less reliable judgments. But most judgments are reliable, and that reliability reflects not the mouthing of already agreed-on judgments but rather the systematic application by trained and experienced members of the art world of similar standards; it is what Hume (1854) described in his essay on taste, and it is similar to the way a group of doctors, confronted with a set of clinical findings, will arrive at a similar diagnosis (analogies can be found in every area of specialized work).

In that sense, not everything can be made into a work of art, just by definition or the creation of consensus, for not everything will pass muster under currently accepted standards in the art world. But this does not mean that there is any more to making something art than, to use Cohen's term, christening it. It is also a matter of christening if the entire art world agrees on standards that, if they are automatically applied, some works clearly meet, so that their classification as art is self-evident, and others as clearly fail to meet; the consensus arises because reasonable members of the world will have no difficulty in classifying works under such circumstances. Constraints on what can be defined as art exist, but they constrain because of the conjunction of the characteristics of objects and the rules of classification current in the world in which they are proposed as art works.

Further, those standards, being matters of consensus, change. Much of the running dialogue of artists and other participants in art worlds has to do with making day-to-day adjustments in the content and application of standards of judgment. In the early 1930s jazz players, critics, and aficionados all agreed that electrical instruments could not produce real music. Charlie Christian's performances on the electric guitar
convinced so many people that they were having the same sort of experience from his playing that they did from music played on a nonelectric instrument that the canon was quickly revised.

How much? Aestheticians, both the institutionalists and their critics, worry about the effect of aesthetic theorizing on artists and art worlds. They express the fear, for instance, that an aesthetic theory which is too restrictive will be unnecessarily depressing to artists and might perhaps unduly constrict their creativity. This overestimates the degree to which art worlds take their direction from aesthetic theorizing; the influence probably runs in the other direction. But the institutionalists draw one important implication from their analysis: Practicing artists, if they want to have their work accepted as art, will have to persuade the appropriate people to certify what they have done as art. (While the basic institutional analysis suggests that anyone can do that, in practice these theorists accept the existing art world as the one which has to be persuaded to do the job.) But if art is what an art world ratifies as art, then I might suggest an alternative strategy, one I have analyzed in more detail elsewhere (Becker 1975, 1979)—the strategy of organizing an art world de novo, which will then ratify as art what one produces. In fact, the strategy has been used often and with considerable success. Others have tried it and failed, but that does not mean it is not a reasonable possibility.

Several difficulties arise in creating a new art world to ratify work which has no home in already existing art worlds. Resources (especially financial support) will probably have been allocated to already existing artistic activities, so that one needs to develop new sources of support, new pools of personnel, and new sources of materials and other facilities (including space in which to perform and display works). Since existing aesthetic theories have not ratified the work, a new aesthetic must be developed and new modes of criticism and standards of judgment enunciated. To say that these things must be done, however, raises an interesting question of the definitional kind that philosophical analysis provokes. How much of the apparatus of an organized art world must be created before the work in question will be treated seriously by a larger audience than that supporting the original group that wanted to create the new world? What it takes to convince people will vary a great deal. Some will require an elaborate ideological explanation. Others—theater managers, operators of recording studios, printers—will ask only for guarantees that their bills be paid.

This question need not, indeed should not, be answered by enunciating criteria. Rather, we should realize that the activities involved can be carried on by varying numbers of people, and without the full-blown institutional apparatus of such a well-equipped world as that, for instance, which surrounds contemporary sculpture and painting or symphonic music and grand opera. When we speak of art worlds, we usually have in mind these well-equipped ones, but in fact paintings, books, music, and all sorts of artistic objects and performances can be produced without all the support personnel these worlds have and are dependent on: critics, impresarios, furnishers of materials and equipment, providers of space, audiences. At an extreme, remember, any artistic activity can in principle be done by one person, who performs all the necessary activities (Becker 1976); this is not common and not a condition many artists aspire to (though one they sometimes yearn for when they have trouble with their fellow participants). As the number of people involved grows, a point is reached at which some stable nucleus of people cooperates regularly to produce the same sort of work; as the number grows larger than that, a point might be reached at which individual artists can produce work for a large audience of people they do not know personally and still have a reasonable expectation of being taken seriously. Call that first point of organization an esoteric world, and the latter an exoteric one. The names and cut-off points are not so important as the recognition that these are more or less arbitrary, the reality being a variety of points that vary along several continua.

How many? Neither Dickie nor Danto is very clear as to how many art worlds there are. Dickie says:

The artwork consists of a bundle of systems: theater, painting, sculpture, literature, music, and so on, each of which furnishes an institutional background for the conferring of status on objects within its domain. No limit can be placed on the number of systems that can be brought under the generic conception of art, and each of the major subsystems contains further subsystems. These features of the artworld provide the elasticity whereby creativity of even the most radical sort can be accommodated. A whole new system comparable to the theater, for example, could be added in one fell swoop. What is more likely is that a new subsystem would be added within a system. For example, junk sculpture added within sculpture, happenings added within theater. Such additions might in time develop into full-blown systems. [Dickie 1975:33]

Blizek (1974) sees that there is an empirical question in this but also sees that the definition of “artworld” is so loose that it is not clear whether there is one artworld, of which these are subparts, or a number of them, possibly unrelated; further, that if there are a number of artworlds they might conflict. Several observations are relevant here.
Empirically, we can see that not only are there the worlds of various art media, but that these may be subdivided at times into quite separate and almost noncommunicating segments. I have spoken of schools and styles as though they competed for the same rewards and audiences, but often they do not. Instead, members of one group develop audiences and other sources of support from sectors of society that would not have supported those other art world segments with whom they might compete. Thus, many painting worlds rely on the same suppliers as recognized contemporary artists for materials, but have quite separate, and often very successful, arrangements for exhibiting, distributing, and supporting their work. The Cowboy Artists of America, for instance, produce paintings for people who would like to buy works by Charles Russell and Frederick Remington, genre painters of the American cowboy West whose work is exhibited in "real" museums, but cannot afford them or cannot find any to buy:

Despite determined inattention by Eastern art critics, cowboy painting and sculpture are so popular that their prices are inflating faster than intrastate natural gas. Cowboy art has its own heroes, its own galleries and even its own publishing house. [Lichtenstein 1977:41]

Regional segments are not so isolated as this, tending to be oriented to the metropolitan centers of the "big" art world (McCall 1977). Their participants suffer from a lack of exhibition opportunities but even more from the sense that success in their region will do them little or no good in the larger world they aspire to but which is almost totally unaware of them.

If we define art worlds by the activities their participants carry on collectively (Becker 1974), we can approach the problem of a general art world by asking what activities a general art world—one which encompasses all the conventional arts—might carry on collectively in such a way that we might want to refer to it as one art world. I can think of two. On the one hand, the various media-oriented subcommunities suffer from many of the same external problems. Thus, a depression might make it harder for all the specific art forms to secure financial support (although the experience of the Great Depression in the United States does not wholly bear this out). A common situation is one in which the government imposes censorship on all the arts in a similar way, so that the experience of people in one arena can be read as a sign of what one can expect in another. Thus a theatrical designer might make his own professional decisions on the basis of what the censors might do about a play he is interested in, arriving at the assessment by hearing about what they have done about a recording by a popular singer, a recent novel, or a new film. Insofar as the participants in all these worlds share experiences, interpretations, and predictions vis-à-vis the censors, they might be said to be engaging in a form of collective activity and thus to constitute an art world.

In another direction, artists in various media-oriented worlds may find that they want to achieve similar kinds of things in their work and share ideas and perspectives on how to accomplish that. For example, during periods of intense nationalism, many artists may see it as their job to somehow symbolize the character and aspirations of their country or people in the works they create. To do that, they have to find imagery and techniques which will convey the ideas and feelings they have in mind as well as finding the ideas and feelings themselves. Insofar as participants in various worlds debate these questions across media lines, they might be said to be participants in one general art world.

Particular artistic institutions often use people from other fields as support personnel for the work that is central in their own field. Thus, visual artists create settings for theatrical and dance performances, writers produce librettos for operas, musicians compose and play backgrounds for films, and so on. Insofar as these activities bring people together across subworld lines, they might be said to be participating in a general art world. Furthermore, because of these possibilities, people from worlds not already connected in this way may find it interesting to contemplate new forms of collaboration, thus creating further links in the general art world. Finally, participants in specific art worlds often come from a limited sector of the environing society, for instance, the educated upper middle class or petty aristocracy. They will thus have connections with each other by virtue of having attended school together or coming from families connected by kinship or friendship, and these connections will serve to create a general art world or, at least, to provide the basis in regular associations which might enable them to collaborate in the kinds of activities already mentioned.

The analysis of this problem makes clear that speaking of art worlds means using shorthand. "Art world," remember, is just a way of talking about people who participate in the making of art works in a routine way. The routine interaction is what constitutes the art world's existence, so questions of definition can generally be resolved by looking at who actually participates with whom in doing what. In that way, the logical and definitional problems of the institutional aesthetic theory (which has a strong empirical component) can be resolved by knowledge of the facts of any particular case.
Aesthetics and Art Worlds

The institutional theory of aesthetics, as we have seen, itself illustrates the process analyzed in the first part of this paper. When an established aesthetic theory does not provide a logical and defensible legitimation of what artists are doing and, more important, what the other institutions of the art world—especially distribution organizations and audiences—accept as art and as excellent art, professional aestheticians will begin to provide the required new rationale. If they do not, someone else probably will, although the rest of the participants might just go ahead without a defensible rationale for their actions. (Whether one is required depends on the amount of controversy, engendered by what they are doing and what they are confronted with.) When earlier theories of art and beauty failed to explain or give a rationale for the enjoyment and celebration of contemporary works widely regarded as excellent, given the amount of argument and competition for space and other resources and honors in the world of contemporary art, and given the number of professional philosophers who might find the problem intriguing, it was a certainty that something like the institutional theory would be produced.

By shifting the locus of the definitional problem from something inherent in the object to some relation between the object and an entity called an art world, the institutional theory makes it once again possible for art world participants to find justification for their activities, and to be able to answer the kind of question leveled at their work that is philosophically so distressing; that is, the question predicated on the failure to find any trace of skill or beauty, thought or emotion, in the works regarded as excellent, and the questions asking if the same works could not have been produced by a chimpanzee, a child, an insane person, or any ordinary member of the society without particular artistic talent. The latter example—that anyone could do it—is perhaps the most damaging. It suggests that artists have no special gift or talent, and thus that the rationale for regarding them as special members of the art world (or the society), entitled by virtue of the display of that talent to special rewards, is fallacious. The institutional theory allows art world participants to define that special talent in the new way, as, for example, the ability to invent imaginative new concepts, thereby conferring legitimacy on the artist’s special role and rewards.

Looking at the institutional theory adds some nuances to the description of art worlds. We see that art world officials have the power to legitimate work as art, but that power is often disputed, so that there is room for argument. As a result, the aesthetician’s desire for definitive criteria by which to distinguish art from non-art, insofar as those criteria might be found in or be expected to be congruent with the actions of art world officials, cannot be satisfied. That is of some interest because aestheticians are not the only ones with such a desire. In fact, sociologists often insist that fields such as the sociology of art or religion or science settle on some definitive criterion of their subject matter. If that criterion is expected to be congruent with either popular or official conceptions of art, the sociological wish for a definitive criterion is likewise unsatisfiable.

We see too that, in principle, any kind of object or action can be legitimated as art, but that in practice every art world has procedures and rules for making those distinctions which, while not clearcut or foolproof, nevertheless make the success of some candidates for the status of art work very unlikely. Those procedures and rules are contained in the conventions and patterns of cooperation by which art worlds carry on their routine activities.

Finally, we see how it might be possible to speak of all the arts as comprising one big art world. Insofar as members of specialized subworlds cooperate in some activities related to their work, that cooperative activity—be it vis-à-vis government censorship, the development of nationalist art, or whatever—can be seen as the operation of one big art world. Such cooperation may be relatively uncommon, and probably is most of the time in any society, so that we might want to say that the operative art worlds are those of the particular media; but this question, like the others, is empirical, and its answer will be found by research.

Note

An earlier version of this paper was given at the Fifth Annual Conference on Social Theory and the Arts, Syracuse University, April 1978. It will appear in a slightly different form in my forthcoming book, Art Worlds (tentative title), to be published by the University of California Press. Some ideas referred to briefly in this paper are explained more fully in Art Worlds, and in my earlier papers as noted in the text.

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The reality of Michelangelo’s melancholia has in the past been a major consideration in the work of scholars attempting to understand the difficult personality of this great artist. Interpretations have ranged from an extreme, virtually psychotic, melancholia to a general melancholic state of mind affected to indicate creative suffering. In recent scholarship, however, judgments have become more severe. For example, Howard Hibbard (1974:175, 179) maintains variously that Michelangelo was “ultra-sensitive,” “undoubtedly neurotic,” and subject to “continual depression,” in a somewhat liberal use of modern psychological terms. Such potentially diagnostic adjectives may be the modern extension of a long-established tradition aptly summarized by the Wittkowers:

There cannot be many adjectives that have not, at one time or another, been used to characterize his [Michelangelo’s] personality. He has been called avaricious and generous; superhuman and puerile; modest and vain; violent, suspicious, jealous, misanthropic, extravagant, tormented, bizarre, and terrible, and this list is far from being complete. [1963:72]

This quantity of adjectives, whose range alone suggests ambivalence, if not ambiguity, raises some concerns about their effect on Michelangelo studies. Specifically, questions about the function and subsequent influence of these descriptive terms come to mind. Such usage is, it seems, primarily expressive, an author’s attempt to convey some intangible aspect of the artist’s work and personality. Such a function is suggested by these observations: “A tragic, a pathetic feeling is found in most of Michelangelo’s works, . . . (Weinberger 1967:2), and “Michelangelo’s grue­somest image of rejection is a bundle of shame and despair” (Steinberg 1975a:52-53). Sometimes a serious attempt is made to assimilate Michelangelo’s character to modern categories of psychology when the suggestion of psychosis is implied: “The Lives of Condive and Vasari clearly reflect Michelangelo’s paranoid hostility to Bramante” or the contention that Michelangelo’s rivalry with Raphael “scarred Michelangelo for life and impaired his perception of reality” (Hibbard 1974:92, 144). And even terms borrowed from psychological dynamics are recruited in the suggestion that a “gradual catharsis characterizes the development of his personality as well as the structure of his individual works” (de Tolnay 1960:94).

As this last example suggests, characterizations of Michelangelo’s personality often lead to, and sometimes replace, our critical understanding of stylistic problems and anomalies in Michelangelo’s art. That this tendency is pervasive is seen both in general observations that “works . . . translate the passionate side of his temperament” and in specific instances such as the David, in which “an ambiguous, unfulfilled, emotionally tense moment in the hero’s career” is said “to correspond to his [Michelangelo’s] own mental state” (de Tolnay 1975:2-3, Hibbard 1974:61). Or that the strangely antiheroic subject matter of the Battle of Cascina gave Michelangelo the “opportunity of projecting . . . the emotional stresses of his early existence” (Hartt 1964:26).

Although no one would seriously hold that Michelangelo was mad, few are willing to consider his art untouched by personal conflict. Remarks about such conflict frequently accompany explanations of the discrepancies in stylistic development in Michelangelo’s early works. Dissimilarities between the Battle of the Centaurs and the Madonna of the Stairs are said to correspond to “the need which the young artist felt to express in disparate works the contrary tendencies of his being: the contemplative, seeking to evoke the eternal image of beauty, and the active, seeking to incarnate the turbulent forces of his own temperament” (de Tolnay 1975:2-3). The stylistic differences between the Santo Spirito Crucifix and the San Petronio statues are similarly attributed to “various aspects of Michelangelo’s unfolding personality, from an extreme grace and gentleness to an emotional violence” previously formed by Michelangelo’s childhood experiences of “the rivalries of a male-dominated environment” (Hartt 1964:20, 17). Such dichotomous characteristics and their potential to result in conflict are even used to describe Michelangelo’s entire artistic career as an expression of “psychic as well as overt conflict, a strong sense of frustration” (Hibbard 1974:25) so pervasive that it can even be found in Michelangelo’s architectural designs in their “evocation of compression and frustration” (Ackerman 1966:17). It would seem not merely coincidental that many of the Wittkowers’ adjectives take the form of antitheses. In a more critical spirit, such antitheses are not always seen as reflections of Michelangelo’s personality, but rather as “metaphors of strength under constraint, of individual will overruled” (Steinberg 1975b:37).

Even though many of the personal qualities ascribed to Michelangelo carrying the implication of serious mental disturbance to modern thinking about personality have been attributed to the topos of the melancholic artist of the Renaissance (Wittkower 1963:chaps. 4 and 5), the tendency to consider Michelangelo unstable in a modern sense continues. Moreover, it is clear that such interpretations have a tendency to become serious avenues by which the...
The theme of victimization is obvious and recurrent. Therefore, in an attempt to clarify the problem of Michelangelo's state of mind, this study will utilize some of Michelangelo's letters and poems, his art, and the biographies by Condivi and Vasari. Perhaps a clearer notion of the psychological characteristics Michelangelo demonstrated may be ascertained from these primary sources, along with a determination of whether diagnoses of severe conditions such as neurosis, constant depression, and psychosis are valid. Considering that melancholia and psychosis have not always been so closely allied in the past as they are in our century, Renaissance attitudes toward both phenomena will also be examined. A major source in this aspect of our investigation is Ariosto's Orlando Furioso, in which, as it well known, the protagonist succumbs to madness. In this way it is hoped that an understanding of Michelangelo's personality, and of the Renaissance conceptions of melancholia and madness, may be more accurately delineated.

The experiences of Michelangelo that may be construed as evidence of melancholia seem to cluster around several characteristic features. These are a sense of suffering from the harshness of existence, sadness revealed through introspective insight, grief and mourning, love, depression, and ruminative or obsessional concerns.

Suffering from the harshness of existence is a frequent theme in Michelangelo's letters. He refers to his "miserable existence" and to his living conditions as affording him "the greatest discomfort" (Ramsden 1963: vol. I, letters 33 and 37). Most of these complaints, however, are directed toward Michelangelo's family in circumstances in which their demands upon him appear to strain him, and are often completed by the phrase that Michelangelo suffers only to help his family. A letter of 1509 states:

For 12 years now I have gone about all over Italy, leading a miserable life; I have borne every kind of humiliation, suffered every kind of hardship, worn myself to the bone with every kind of labor, risked my very life in a thousand dangers, solely to help my family; . . . [Ramsden 1963: vol. I, letter 49] followed three years later by:

For I lead a miserable existence and reckon not of life nor honor—that is of this world; I live wearied by stupendous labors and beset by a thousand anxieties. And thus have I lived for some 15 years now and never an hour of happiness have I had, and all this have I done in order to help you, . . . [Ramsden 1963: vol. I, letter 82]

The theme of victimization is obvious and recurrent. To what extent these plaints induced guilt in Michelangelo's family is not ascertainable, but the somewhat manipulative and reproachful qualities of the letters are less revealing for our purposes than is Michelangelo's poetry when it treats the same subject.

That a harsh life suits Michelangelo's interpretation of life and art is expressed in the following excerpts from his poems of 1532 and 1547, respectively:

I live on my own death; if I see right,
My life with an unhappy lot is happy;
If ignorant how to live on death and worry,
Enter into this fire, where I'm destroyed and burnt.
[Gilbert 1963:36, no. 54]a

No one has mastery
Before he is at the end
Of his art and his life.
[Gilbert 1963:173, no. 323]a

Michelangelo reveals his understanding of the benefits such an existence can provide; in fact, several poems reveal not only a sense of the positive value of distress, but an ironic appreciation of the inherent paradox:

I get my happiness from my dejection,
And these disturbances give me rest;
To him who asks it, God may grant ill-fortune!
[Gilbert 1963:150, no. 265; terza rima stanzas, Girardi 267]

My honored art, wherein I was for a time
In such esteem, has brought me down to this:
Poor and old, under another's thumb.
I am undone if I do not die fast!
[Gilbert 1963:151, no. 265; Girardi 267]

The harsh existence to which Michelangelo has subscribed is one of hard work and dedication, accompanied by the difficulties which such a course entails, dealing as it does with the extremes of existence. That such an interpretation of life is not without its pretensions is acknowledged by Michelangelo through his ironic self-criticism. This aspect of Michelangelo's suffering, then, appears to be self-inflicted, satisfying, and tied strongly to a sense of striving toward a higher goal. The extent to which these features comprise melancholia is certainly minimal. It is both a commonplace and long-standing feature of melancholia for introspection to lead to inaction, a view clearly untenable in this instance.

These examples point toward our next theme, the consideration of Michelangelo's insight into his own experience. In this vein, Michelangelo adds in a letter of 1515 to his father: "I do not go running after fictions and am not therefore quite crazy, as you all imagine (italics mine)" (Ramsden 1963: vol. I, letter 107). It is instructive that this excerpt reveals Michelangelo's own conception of madness as a failure to discern the truth; that is, a mentality immersed in delusions or illu-
sions is what he emphasizes in this use of pazzia. And that Michelangelo does not think himself possessed of this characteristic is suggested in the following letter of 1524:

Yet because they say they find me in some way strange and obsessed, which harms no one but myself, they presume to speak ill of me and to abuse me; which is the reward of all honest men. [Ramdsden 1963: vol. I, letter 161]

Michelangelo understands his own difficulty as being obsessional in nature, and another letter of 1542 confirms the constancy of his point of view:

I reply that one paints with the head and not with the hands, and if one cannot concentrate, one brings disgrace upon oneself. Therefore, until my affair is settled, I can do no good work. [Ramdsden 1963:vol. II, letter 227]

Moreover, this passage reveals the obsessional's concern with thought, with the products of thought, and with the preeminent position of work and accomplishment in the obsessional character's view of existence.

It is commonly accepted that Michelangelo's insight into his own character was remarkable, but that his understanding of this character as obsessive is rarely, if ever, emphasized. A frequently quoted letter of 1525 reveals this understanding quite emphatically:

Yesterday evening our friend Capt. Cuio and several other gentlemen kindly invited me to go and have supper with them, which gave me the greatest pleasure, as I emerged a little from my depression, or rather from my obsession. I not only enjoyed the supper, which was extremely pleasant, but also, and even more than this, the discussions which took place. [Ramdsden 1963:vol. I, letter 170]

From the context of Michelangelo's numerous uses of pazzo, it would seem that he considered himself to be more obsessed and preoccupied with his thoughts than depressed, a state which our other excerpts support. Regarding thought content, however, the differential between melancholia and an obsession with melancholic or sad concerns may be difficult to ascertain. From an analysis of the letters and poems alone, it is likely that we may conclude only the coexistence of these two major characteristics, the melancholic and the obsessional. However, the biographies by Condivi and Vasari, which contain information concerning two important variables in this differential—Michelangelo's habits of daily life and his reactions to the loss of loved ones (both aspects being diagnostically significant to the melancholic and obsessional conditions)—will be considered.

In their treatment of Michelangelo's life, both Condivi and Vasari make generalized statements regarding Michelangelo's character. They explain his reputation as being eccentric and bizarre to be the result of the zeal to which he dedicated himself to art rather than some problem within his own personality. Vasari also firmly states: "Art does not permit wandering of the mind" (Vasari 1946 ed.:292). Again, the Wittkowers, in Born under Saturn, confirm that much artistic bizarrie in this period may be ascribed to a self-conscious eccentricity to which nearly all Renaissance artists conformed, rather than to personality disorders (Wittkower 1963:chaps. 4 and 5).

Vasari and Condivi deal with Michelangelo's habits of daily living—in particular, his eating and sleeping habits. Although differing somewhat in their explanations, both relate that Michelangelo slept and ate little. Condivi attributes this to considerations of health, whereas for Vasari it is the necessary sacrifice in the life of the hard-working artist. In addition, Vasari emphasizes that much which would now be considered a sign of depression—lack of appetite and sleep disturbance—occurred when Michelangelo was still a young man and that these behaviors were largely the result of adolescent attitudes:

He has told me that, in his youth, he often slept in his clothes, so tired that it did not seem worthwhile to undress only to dress again the next morning. [Vasari 1946 ed.:294]

If not due entirely to the carelessness of youth, Michelangelo's personal carelessness and his sleeping and eating difficulties cannot soundly be ascribed to depression: an important feature in the depressive constellation, that of an inability to work, is absent. Further, the vital element in melancholia or depression—ination—is nowhere mentioned in any account of Michelangelo's life. Such inactivity may also be found in an obsessional neurosis in "an ever-increasing degree of indecision, loss of energy, and restriction of freedom" (Freud 1963 ed.:260)—qualities similarly lacking in accounts of Michelangelo's life.

A further area of inquiry pertinent to this study is Michelangelo's reactions to the deaths of those to whom he was close. Condivi relates, after the death of Lorenzo de' Medici in 1492:

Michelangelo returned to his father's house, and he suffered such anguish over this death that for many days he was unable to do anything. But then he became himself again and . . . carved a Hercules. [Condivi 1976 ed.:12]

Recording Michelangelo's reaction to the death of Vittoria Colonna in 1547, Condivi reveals a somewhat more serious reaction: "On account of her death he remained a long time in despair and as out of his mind" (Condivi 1976 ed.:103). However, an excerpt
from a letter of the same year indicates that, although quite disturbed over Vittoria Colonna’s death, Michelangelo knew how to deal with it: “You’ll say rightly that I’m old and distracted, but I assure you that only distractions prevent one from being beside oneself with grief” (Ramsden 1963:vol. II, letter 281).¹³ Michelangelo’s reaction to the death of his servant, Urbino, in 1555, similarly does not reveal a melancholic reaction:

> Urbino passed from this life to my intense grief, leaving me so stricken and troubled that it would have been more easeful to die with him, because of the love I bore him, which he merited no less; . . . [Ramsden 1963: vol. II, letter 408]

And, on the death of his father in the early 1530s, a willingness to grieve and to learn from such an experience is further demonstrated:

> As you depart; so I must separate
> Between the son dying first and you, thereafter,
> Of whom I’m speaking, tongue, pen, and lament.
> By having died my dying you will teach,
> Dear father, and I see you in my thought
> Where the world hardly ever lets us reach.
> [Gilbert 1963:61, no. 84; Girardi no. 86]

From these few excerpts, it is not unreasonable to conclude that Michelangelo’s reactions to these deaths constitute normal grief reactions rather than the more protracted reaction of melancholia. Moreover, the ability to experience grief militates further against the development of depression and melancholia (Freud 1957 ed.:126-127).

In his paper “Mourning and Melancholia,” Freud defines melancholia, distinguishing it from the just as intense, but more transient, experience of grief:

> The distinguishing mental features of melancholia are a profound dejection, abrogation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment. [Freud 1957 ed.: 125]

Freud states that grief shares with depression all these characteristics except for the dramatic loss in self-esteem: “In grief the world becomes poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself which becomes poor and empty)” (Freud 1957 ed.:127). Further, the mourner is conscious of who it is that has been lost; in melancholia, however, although the sufferer may be aware of whom he has lost, he may not be conscious of “what it is he has lost in them” (Freud 1957 ed.:127). The clinical picture of this disorder “is completed by sleeplessness and refusal of nourishment” (Freud 1957 ed.:128). We have remarked elsewhere that the extremity of this condition eliminates its feasibility as an interpretation of Michelangelo’s character.

In sum, selections from the poetry and letters reveal not only that Michelangelo most likely experienced grief reactions within the normal range but, more importantly, that he invested much insight into the artistic expression of the dynamics (love-death, fusion-separation) of this sort of experience.¹⁴ Although clearly not suffering from melancholia or reactive depression subsequent to the loss of significant relationships, Michelangelo had an investment in situating his artistic problems within this psychological arena, suggesting that this activity as well may function as an antidepressant in much the same way as the ability to experience grief. In addition to being adaptive strengths, the former may be evidence of the obsessive character’s defense of intellectual control (Salzman 1968:11). In a poem written at his father’s death, Michelangelo admits that he has had a struggle between intellectual control and depression:

> And even though the soul consents to reason,
> It does so stiffly, that I’m filled
> Far more with more depression later on.
> [Gilbert 1963:62, no. 84; Girardi no. 86]

Although Michelangelo is not demonstrably melancholic by modern standards, it is necessary to consider also the distinctive elements of the Renaissance conception of melancholia. The melancholic character, originally one of the four humors and aligned over the years with the planet Saturn, altered in meaning during the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. In post-medieval poetry, melancholy became associated less with medical usage and increasingly with an emphasis on a subjective and transitory mood (Panofsky et al. 1964:218). By the beginning of the Renaissance, this transitory nature was allied with a brooding withdrawal from reality. The heightened self-awareness that such a condition implied was tinged with the romantic connotation afforded a tragic hero. Moreover, melancholia came to be seen as an attractive condition:

> This consciousness became so much a part of self-awareness that there was scarcely a man of distinction who was not either genuinely melancholic or at least considered as such by himself and others. [Panofsky et al. 1964:232]

It is within this perspective that the melancholia ascribed to both Michelangelo and Raphael, as well as to others in the Renaissance, must be viewed. As the Wittkowers conclude:

> In the late fifteenth century a new type of artist emerged with distinct traits of personality. The approach of these artists to their work is characterized by furious activity alternating with creative pauses; their psychological make-up by agonized introspection; their temperament by a tendency to melancholy; and their social behavior by a craving for solitude and by eccentricities of an endless variety. [Wittkower 1963:91]
The amalgamation of melancholy with artistic achievement is not restricted to artists alone, and this notion is revived in the Renaissance's resuscitation of the "Aristotelian" Problem XXX, in which all men of achievement are noted to be melancholic. The accomplishment of this revival is established in the work of the Neoplatonists, particularly Pico della Mirandola and Marsilio Ficino. Whereas Pico's emphasis is in positioning the melancholic temperament on a narrow pivotal point between divinity and animality, Ficino's emphasis is "to identify what 'Aristotle' had called the melancholy of intellectually outstanding men with Plato's 'divine frenzy'" (Panofsky et al 1964:259). Ficino states in his monograph De vita triplici, which is devoted to this subject, that

Saturn seldom denotes ordinary characters and destinies, but rather men who are set apart from the others, divine or animal, . . . [Panofsky et al. 1964:253]

However, Ficino considers the melancholic temperament an unhappy fate, and the rest of his monograph is devoted to suggesting methods of coping with it. Ficino therefore maintains the antithesis, which melancholy has come to imply even in the face of its glorification in the role of creativity. In this way it would seem that

the many-sidedness of Saturn shrinks to a clear antithesis between extreme intellectual disorder and extreme intellectual ability, emphasizing strongly the significance and vulnerability of the latter. [Panofsky et al., 1964:252]

Thus we arrive at a point where melancholy, with its antithetical potential, can be and is affected by creative men of all sorts in the Renaissance, even in the face of its more serious onus, the threat of madness. The question to which we address ourselves now, therefore, is to what extent did the creatively melancholic man court madness and by what other forms was madness recognized in the Renaissance. Michel Foucault, in Madness and Civilization, makes note of a Renaissance literary form which acknowledges madness as the result of desperate passion:

Love disappointed in its excess, and especially love deceived by the fatality of death, has no other recourse but madness. As long as there was an object, mad love was more love than madness; left to itself, it pursues itself in the void of delirium. [Foucault 1965:30]

Foucault is specifically referring to Shakespeare and Cervantes, but it is observed in the World History of Psychiatry (Howells 1975:54) that the Italian prototype of this literary form is Ariosto's poem Orlando Furioso, published in 1516, in which Orlando is driven mad by unrequited love. Having come upon certain evidence that his loved one belongs to another, what had pre-

viously been an obsession with Orlando begins to grow to delusive proportions:

A victim now of passion unreturned,
For God and king no longer he's concerned.
[Ariosto 1975 ed.:ix.1. 286.]

This withdrawal continues:

By means of notions so improbable,
And from the truth departing more and more,
Although for comfort he has little scope,
The unhappy Count contrives to build false hope.
[Ariosto 1975 ed.:xxiii. 104. 719.]

Three times, four times, six times, he read the script,
Attempting still, unhappy wretch!, in vain,
(For the true meaning he would not accept)
To change the sense of what was clear and plain.
[Ariosto 1975 ed.:xxiii. iii.720.]

The role of delusions in the Renaissance conception of madness is emphasized by Foucault, particularly in its typically humanistic orientation:

There is no madness but that which is in every man, since it is man who constitutes madness in the attachment he bears for himself and by the illusions he entertains. [1965:26]

Further, as we see happening to Orlando, "In this delusive attachment to himself, man generates his madness like a mirage" (Foucault 1965:27). However, this experience of madness is not entirely related to an intelligence which is human, or, in other words, by a disorder in thought processes. Foucault emphasizes the element of animality in the Renaissance experience of madness:

But at the beginning of the Renaissance, the relations with animality are reversed; the beast is set free; it escapes the world of legend and moral illustration to acquire a fantastic nature of its own. And by an astonishing reversal, it is now the animal that will stalk man, capture him, and reveal to him his own truth. [1965:21]

This animality is the next stage in Orlando's madness:

His grief so swells, his sorrows so amass
That madness clouds him, in which long he erred.
On the fourth-day, by fury roused once more,
The mail and armour from his back he tore.

His scattered arms mute testimony bear
To his unhinged and catastrophic mood.
Then next his clothing he begins to tear,

. . . ; unarmed his strength immense is,
Barehanded, he uproots at the first blow
A tall and noble pine and lays it low.
[Ariosto 1975 ed.:xxxiii. 132–134. 726.]
In this way Orlando’s madness is given over to rage, fury, and the destruction of nature. This mistreatment is not confined to nature alone, however: Orlando has already abused his horse, an apparently criminal act in the Renaissance (Ariosto 1975 ed.: xxv).

In conclusion, revealing his familiarity with the Renaissance notion of the potential for madness in the very occurrence of passion (Foucault 1965:88), Ariosto speaks at the end of his poem:

For what is love but madness after all,
As every wise man in the wide world knows?
Though it is true not everyone may fall
Into Orlando’s state, his frenzy shows
What perils lurk; what sign is there more plain
Than self-destruction, of a mind insane?
[Ariosto 1975 ed.: xxix]

Thus animality, rage, delusion, and self-destruction are the qualities by which Ariosto describes the experience of the madness of Orlando. Melancholic attributes, such as brooding, grief, contemplation, and inaction, are not included in the delineation of Orlando’s sorry state, except for one brief stage in his decline:

The Count requests a bed but will not eat
Sated with grief, he wants no other meat.

Besides this one reference, it is apparent that Ariosto does not utilize the qualities of the melancholic temperament to describe the madness of Orlando, although it is probable that Ariosto knew of them. It would seem, then, that although recognizing the potential for madness in the melancholic temperament, the Renaissance preserved something of a distinction between melancholia and madness. The attributes of melancholy were originally conceived in the distinction of various characters. If Orlando typifies the conception of madness in the Renaissance, then this confirms melancholy’s association with character structure as opposed to madness. Further, given Michelangelo’s own inclination to consider himself beset with obsessions, it would seem that many of the characteristics which the Renaissance attributed to melancholy are more properly ascribed to the obsessional character, or a character structure in which most defenses are of the obsessive variety. Interestingly, Orlando’s cure is effected through regaining his obsessive defenses—his reintegration is established through the learning of classical balance, proportion, and control.16

This distinction between melancholia and madness is further upheld by the qualitative difference between contemporary accounts of the melancholia of Raphael and Michelangelo and those of more seriously disturbed artists such as Hugo van der Goes and Annibale Carracci (Wittkower 1963: chap. 5). In accounts of the conditions of the latter two, the inability to work assumes a primary importance. This inability to work, although a primary characteristic of melancholia, is notable in its absence from the constellation of attributes to which melancholic creative men subscribed in the Renaissance.

Although mindful of the potential for madness in the melancholic character, the Renaissance did not really confound these characteristics with psychosis or neurosis. The results of this analysis would indicate that much of the melancholy constellation may be more properly understood as constituting an obsessional character structure. That this is true for Michelangelo may be seen by observing that, despite being worried and beset by troubles, Michelangelo’s ability to sustain long periods of concentration and work was never impaired, precluding an interpretation of psychosis; and there is no recorded onset of any such symptomology, about which Michelangelo would certainly have complained. Although Michelangelo dwelt on gloomy issues, his thinking, though characteristically ruminate and obsessive, never approaches the extremity of a withdrawal from reality. Further, Michelangelo’s erratic behavior in social situations is not that commonly found in neurosis, conforming instead to the pattern characteristic of problems in character structure; that is, the ways in which social intercourse is mismanaged are reliable, repetitive, stable, and restricted only to specified situations. That this character structure may best be described as obsessional in nature is confirmed by the recurrence of such features as control through intellect, omniscience, and other obsessive traits.

Finally, alongside the previously mentioned distinction between melancholy and madness in the Renaissance, it seems reasonable to maintain that Michelangelo’s obsessive character is also quite distinct from the Renaissance conception of madness as well as our own; certainly, little evidence has been found to justify the continuing use of severe diagnoses of Michelangelo’s personality. Moreover, the tendency to project the qualities of serious conditions on Michelangelo’s art has complicated the art historical assessment of his work. In addition to the interpretations cited at the beginning of this paper, the tenacity as well as the potential confusion of such psychological interpretations may be demonstrated by an instance in which the same work of art is claimed to exemplify diametrically opposite personality attributes—emotional violence and emotional detachment. In his discussion of the style of the Rachel and Leah statues, Weinberger (1967:279) concludes that “what Burckhardt regarded as an indication of coldness is rather a sign of that detachment which marks the works of Michelangelo’s old age,” in answer to Hartt’s observation (1968:272) that “below this austere surface still pulsates the physical and emotional violence of Michelangelo’s own nature.”
The paramount importance of this interpretative bias for Michelangelo studies is heightened by Leo Steinberg's recent revisionist interpretations of Michelangelo's last paintings. While reestablishing the primacy of the visual image, Steinberg is led to question this tendency to ascribe what is unclear about Michelangelo's art to his personality, and in so doing he arrives at a new understanding of the artist's creative procedures. In his introductory discussion in *Michelangelo's Last Paintings*, Steinberg mentions an unusual document—the artist's list of three menus with accompanying illustrations, which begin in a neat and orderly way but eventually cascade down the right side and bottom of the paper. First published by de Tolnay, this peculiar document was once again attributed to that so-called unreliable aspect of Michelangelo's personality as another instance of the artist's being "carried away by his temperament, . . ." (Steinberg 1975b:7). Not satisfied with this interpretation, Steinberg goes on to remind us that "a temperament is complex" and, after further investigation, isolates what he believes to be an important aspect of Michelangelo's working method and creative process—the impulse to construct the broadest referential framework, as the artistic "concept expands against the repressive force of some outer limit contracting upon it." Rather than speculating on the vagaries of temperament, Steinberg attempts to elucidate the rational, structural attributes upon which Michelangelo's working process is grounded, and in so doing extends our understanding of the tendency often observed in the artist's work, and sometimes designated as his preference for obstacles, which "apparently he liked . . . perhaps even sought . . . out; . . ." (Ackerman 1966:20). Clearly, Steinberg has arrived at a theoretically more productive conclusion than that previously suggested by Frederick Hartt. In attempting to fathom Michelangelo's preference for the exceptionally emphatic frame in his discussion of the Medici Chapel and the Tomb of Julius II, Hartt (1968:19) relied on a psychological, and distinctly negative, explanation that the frames gain prominence as part of Michelangelo's "obsessive delight in ornamentation." It is this kind of interpretation that militates against the possibility that obsessive traits such as control and omniscience may, in fact, be put to constructive use in the service of Michelangelo's artistic conceptions.

Even more revealing is Steinberg's interpretation of the *Last Judgment*, in which supposed pessimism, punishment, and masochism are first routed by a reexamination of the work itself and then clarified by an understanding of the artist's religious, though probably heretical, beliefs. Although the tradition of viewing the *Last Judgment* as a *Dies Irae* conforms both to scripture and primary sources, and has prompted "the ready agreement of most later writers on Michelangelo, who persist in seeing the fresco as a 'wholly punitive manifestation,' " Steinberg has found evidence to the contrary, thereby revising the widespread and long-standing tradition of confounding Michelangelo's iconographic and stylistic intentions with negative personality traits (1975a:50). The *Last Judgment* can no longer be seen as the result of "Michelangelo's conceptions of ancient myths of punishment" (de Tolnay 1960:25), nor can the self-image with flayed skin be thoroughly understood as "the artist's inner nature, corroded by self-pity so intense as to become an affliction" (Hartt 1964:144). Even less is the *Last Judgment* yet another instance of a tendency in the artist's late years of a "recurrent masochistic attitude" (Hartt 1964:156).

Formulated on a reassessment of the structure and imagery of the *Last Judgment*, accompanied by documentation and interpretative support—and, significantly, by not telescoping the religious guilt of Michelangelo's beliefs into personal and neurotic guilt—Steinberg can approach the optimism of a *Last Judgment* conceived as merciful. And this despite the fact that for 400 years, those who gave account of the picture in word or image obeyed a compulsion to accentuate whatever seemed harsh, to unsee and suppress any tremor of exultation or gentleness. The abundance of Michelangelo's hope was either ignored or turned into its opposite. [Steinberg 1975a:60]

Perhaps the uncritical use by most Michelangelo scholars of psychological terminology which prompted this study has some justification as an expressive device. Unfortunately, however, the willingness to conflate neurotic and even psychotic traits with artistic activity, which then encroach upon stylistic and iconographic interpretations, creates a false impression of the creative person and his art—an impression that is clearly inadequate for an understanding of so major an artistic innovator as Michelangelo.

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**Notes**

The present study is not concerned with examining this material in order to deduce unconscious sources of motivation or conflict as would be appropriate to a traditional psychoanalytic study of personality; see Condini (1976 ed.) and Vasari (1946 ed.). For a recent contribution in this vein, see Parofsky et al. (1964). 2 See Giovanni Poggi, *Il Carteggio di Michelangelo*. I:51, letter XXXVI: "un chattivo essere"; I:55, letter XL: "grandissimo disaggio."
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**Reviews and Discussion**


**Reviewed by D.N. Perkins**
Project Zero, Harvard University

**The Sense of Order and the Perils of Explanation**

Would Martians have wallpaper? Perhaps they would, according to the deliberations of E. H. Gombrich in his intellectually and visually impressive new book, *The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art*. Not that Gombrich ever writes about Martians. His explicit concern is with the human perceiver and maker of decorative design. Nonetheless, if we read Gombrich for his essential logic rather than only his earthbound subject, he seems to say something about Martians, too.

The first thing to be understood is that *The Sense of Order* undertakes several missions at once. It gives us a history of attitudes toward ornament, documenting many degrees of approbation and condemnation up to the severe verdict of Alfred Loos, who, in a 1908 essay, damned ornament as primitive, criminal, and degenerate and urged that functionalism govern appearance. *The Sense of Order* provides a tour of the variety of decoration, ranging from the simple and subtle statement of a Japanese bowl to the numbing intricacy of the Alhambra. The book samples the history of ornamentation, tracking the evolution of ornamental motifs; for example, the survival and spread of the modeled face of a lion with a ring in its mouth 2500 years ago in the mind of a Greek artist. Whatever the theme, the points are profusely illustrated by photographs and drawings in the text, an extensive section of larger black-and-white photographs, and a number of color plates. Gombrich is determined to have us see what he means.

But of all these missions, the most vigorous, and the one which subsumes the others, is the quest for explanation. Gombrich is a determined explicator. He wants to account for our responsiveness to ornament in terms of the nature of knowledge and the process of obtaining knowledge. He wants to explain the shift away from elaborate ornamentation with the advent of the machine age, which, by making mechanical reproduction possible, devalued complexity. He wants to account for the heights of ornamental elaboration as products of an evolving craft rather than as the abrupt inventions of individuals. He even tries his hand at explaining why vertical stripes make for thinness, and horizontal for fatness. Gombrich by no means invents all such accounts; he often discourses on the ideas of others, making a judicious selection. But one way or another, his commitment to explanation in an area as psychologically messy as the arts is striking.

In fact, this emphasis suggests an approach to understanding *The Sense of Order* better and appraising its success: What sorts of explanations are offered, and just how adequate are they? Such questions are best pondered after a brief explanation of explanation itself. Israel Scheffler (1963), in part of his *The Anatomy of Inquiry*, clarifies what an explanation ought to accomplish. Here, only the barest sketch can be given. In general, explanation means subsuming the event to be explained under laws or principles. On the one hand, the principles must be sound for a sound explanation. On the other, the principles, plus particular conditions specific to the occasion, should deductively imply the event. For example, the properties of phosphorus, plus conditions on the rate, force, and so on, of striking a match on a particular occasion, imply that the match would light, and so explain the event. In fact, informal explanations often are elliptical, omitting some conditions that would be required for strict deduction. Sometimes this merely signifies the absence of premises that could be provided readily enough; at others it signifies a fundamentally incomplete account, one which would require serious investigation to fill out and finally deny or affirm. Since Gombrich, of course, does not write in the formal language of logic, the question becomes whether his explanations, bolstered by reasonable and ready assumptions, really imply what they try to explain.

**Gombrich's Basic Concepts**

This obvious danger in a book with a title like *The Sense of Order* is that no good account could be given of so fuzzy-sounding a concept. Indeed, Gombrich himself runs shy of stating just what sorts of order he means:

> I certainly would not venture to define the concept of order I use in the main title of this book, but I trust it will bring out the feature which interests me in decorative design. The arrangement of elements according to similarity and difference and the enjoyment of repetition and symmetry extend from the string of beads to the layout of the page in front of the reader, and, of course, beyond to the rhythms of movement, speech and music, not to mention the structures of society and the systems of thought. [p. x]

Instead of a definition we get a tour. However, vague boundaries or not, Gombrich's sense of order turns out to have a more substantial center to it than one might at first think.

Gombrich bases his sense of order on Karl Popper's analysis of scientific inquiry, opening his introduction with a quote from the philosopher: "It was first in animals and children, but later also in adults,
that I observed the immensely powerful need for regularity—the need which makes them seek for regularities" (p. 1). In Popper’s concept of inquiry, as adopted by Gombrich, understanding is a product not just of an order-seeking, but an order-presuming, process, in which simple orderings are hypothesized until disconfirmed by later experience. The world is known, so far as it can be known, through active exploration based on hypotheses revised only as they conflict with new data. Furthermore, it seems that organisms have to proceed in this way most of the time, for to behave otherwise would waste too much time and energy on needless hypothesizing or would ignore counterrelevance. A third alternative, to depend on direct knowledge of the world, is ultimately unintelligible, and no realistic alternative at all. Gombrich stresses, in company with contemporary psychologists interested in perception—Ulrich Neisser and Richard Gregory, for instance—that this hypothesis-making, order-oriented way of proceeding, and the love of order that accompanies it, must operate as much at the perceptual level as at the level of extended intellectual inquiry. But, paradoxically, while order is precious, so is disorder. According to Popper, disconfirmation strongly informs, by decisively knocking out hypotheses, that confirmation can never inform by letting pass hypotheses which might later prove faulty. To make the most of its capacity to presume orderliness, the inquiring organism must be predisposed to seek out breaks in the order—to put the hypothesis at risk and see how it fares. This stands behind what Gombrich calls "the most basic fact of aesthetic experience, the fact that delight lies somewhere between boredom and confusion" (p. 9).

Returning to the question of explanation: Are the principles of order-hypothesizing and disconfirmation-seeking, which are founded, on a thoughtful account of the nature of knowledge, adequate to explain the human attraction to decorative design? No doubt there is room for debate, but at least the explanatory principles have some backing, and perhaps they do imply an attraction to decoration. The intelligent organism, like the most ignorant amoeba, will have to proceed according to Popper’s epistemology. We can assume that this intelligent organism will have drives, and accompanying emotions, which move it to apply the hypothesis-making strategy perceptually and in other ways, else it would never have become intelligent. We can assume the intelligent organism will have the power to arrange things and make things. So, for any intelligent organism, some sort of patterning would be bound to stimulate its Popperian mind simply as pattern, and, being intelligent, motivated, and capable, the organism would make such things to enjoy them. In short, Martians would have wallpaper, or some unearthly equivalent, though of course we humans might not like it at all.

Now I’m well aware that some of the assumptions leading to this conclusion could be challenged. But the important point here is that Popper’s epistemology does seem to imply Gombrich’s sense of order, especially the responsiveness to pattern that it articulates. If the implication is not strict, neither is it far-fetched, and Gombrich’s sense of order comes closer to satisfying the deductive requirement for explanation than at first seems probable.

Another explanatory concept Gombrich employs is habit. Gombrich notes that under the influence of habit decorations have changed slowly. Radical invention is nonexistent, considerable invention the exception, and the gradual evolution of decorative motifs, some of which can be traced back for millennia, the rule. Gombrich draws an analogy here to the role of schemata in representational art and their gradual development, as discussed in his Art and Illusion. But he notes a contrast as well. Where the quest for realism gave the development of those representational schemata a definite direction, the influences on decorative schemata have been much more diffuse, and a unified account of why decorations have changed as they have becomes difficult. Nonetheless, Gombrich explores various approaches.

Although habit extends Gombrich’s explanatory armamentum, it is more a corollary than an addition to it, for, as he points out, “The force of habit may be said to spring from the sense of order” (p. 171). Habit really amounts to a temporal sense of order analogous to the spatial sense of order exhibited in wallpaper and fluted columns for example. That today’s world will be more or less like yesterday’s is the hypothesis the perceiver projects, the hypothesis that allows him to make sense of a world which otherwise would be cluttered and confusing. “In the study of perception,” Gombrich says, “the force of habit makes itself felt in the greater ease with which we take in the familiar” (p. 171). Presumably, in analogy to the spatial sense of order, this hypothesis is also one which the perceiver expects will be a little bit disconfirmed.

But does Gombrich’s basic idea really explain the role of habits? In particular, does it imply that habits are required? Why couldn’t some creature—our Martian, say—instead of relying on a repertoire of standard schemata, extrapolate the individual experiences of the past to directly comprehend current events, much as we, in perceiving the symmetry of a design, extrapolate from one side of the design to the other? The answer is practical, rather than epistemological. While the sense of order per se arises because the organism must, logically, proceed by hypotheses, habits arise because the organism must, in all practicality, crystallize some of those hypotheses into habits. The amount of computation required to match past experiences, unsorted, uncategorized, unschematized, against current ones for a “good fit” would be un-
manageable. Gombrich himself does not make this argument, but the basic explanatory construct again tends to imply the phenomena it is invoked to explain—the force of habit and, in turn, the gradual evolution of decorative designs.

Perhaps here is a good place to ask: Why all this philosophy? Why spend so many sentences examining the abstract force of Gombrich’s explanatory apparatus? The reason is that I think this clarifies Gombrich’s ambition, even though I have made it more explicit than he. Gombrich is very concerned to offer really basic explanations. He persistently tries to account for the perceptual phenomena associated with decorative design in terms fundamental to our understanding of what it is to be an intelligent organism. Gombrich in effect assaults the barrier between the touchy-feely world of aesthetics and the tough business of practical intelligence, seeking to root the one in the other, as of course other authors have done in their own ways. Furthermore, he has not done badly at it.

Some Points of Order

Of course, not all characteristics of human aesthetic response will stem from basic principles of intelligent information processing. For one thing, the human organism seems too much an accident, too much one intelligence among possible others that might use the same principles in different ways and prove responsive to somewhat different patterns. As noted before, the Martian’s wallpaper needn’t please us at all. Gombrich is well aware of such limits, and emphasizes how little one can predict about the effects on the viewer of a visual design: Bigger or smaller, chosen to be familiar or unfamiliar, presented in times of one fashion or another, the same design may inspire radically different reactions. Gombrich could, of course, have said that this, too, is part of the sense of order, order over time, within culture, and so on. But, laudably, he refrains.

The problem is that any effects of size, culture, and so on could be accommodated just as well as any other. This is the same as saying that the implication condition emphasized earlier fails, the sense of vacuousness we get from such explanations apparently reflecting the failure.

The existence of such general problems does not mean that Gombrich refrains from offering explanations for particular phenomena, however. On the contrary, he usually tries. One interesting example is his notion of what he calls a “field of force,” in metaphorical, but only metaphorical, reference to the thinking of the Gestaltists. Gombrich’s field of force concerns arrangements with a center and a decorative border and emphasizes two effects: those things constituting a design in the border tend to lose their individual qualities and to direct attention toward the center; those things in the center, on the other hand, tend to have their individual qualities emphasized. Gombrich illustrates this with numerous examples, perhaps most charmingly by a cake decorated with cherries. The cherries around the rim seem less flavorful morsels and more a frame. However, “The cherry in the centre of the cake is very much a cherry” (p. 156).

What about our principle of deduction? Does Gombrich’s field of force concept pass this test of explanatory adequacy? Yes, it does. The field of force simply posits general characteristics of situations where there are a center and a border and makes deductive predictions in individual cases like the cake. The particular is subsumed under and implied by the general. Put this way, the field of force is simply a low-level inductive generalization, much narrower than Gombrich’s overriding sense of order, and not grounded in the basic character of an intelligent organism. But explanation it still is.

However, this will not do for Gombrich. He is determined to relate the field of force to his sense of order. His efforts afford a good opportunity both to explore cautiously the vertical architecture of his concepts and to test whether the details are as sturdy as the broad structure seems. So again, we start from the field of force. The weakened identity of elements on a border is in fact one example of a more general phenomenon: the weakened identity of any repeated unit in a large design. Gombrich discusses this phenomenon extensively, noting, for example, how the multiple faces of Andy Warhol’s Marilyn Monroe become drained of identity. Gombrich elsewhere asserts a related notion, that scanty apprehension of individual parts is inherent to the nature of design. “To expect that we read every motif in the Alhambra as we read a book is not only unrealistic. It is contrary to the spirit of decoration, which offers us a feast for the eye without demanding that we should taste of every dish” (p. 103). Gombrich has this to say about how the perceiver normally encounters a design: “Faced with an array of identical objects . . . we rapidly form the preliminary hypothesis that we are confronted with a lawful assembly, and we need only sample the elements for redundancies by sweeping our eye along the whole series and just taking in one repeating component” (p. 151). All of this, of course, relates to the overarching Popperian view.

Gombrich’s conceptual notions certainly relate to one another and certainly help us assemble a coherent conception of the perceptual response to decorative design. However, they do not quite relate to one another in an explanatory way. Consider, for example, the connection between the field of force and the more general vitiation of identity that comes with patterned repetition. The latter implies the weakened individuality of the border elements in the field of force, but does not at all imply the enhancement of the center. Gombrich makes an effort to bridge this gap, suggest-
ing that the enhancement of the center might follow from the tendency of the viewer to survey the order in the most effective way: "In the kaleidoscope the radial symmetry pulls the eye toward the centre from which redundancies are most easily surveyed." The suggestion seems to be that Gombrich's general concepts, plus an efficiency principle, send the eye to the center. But are redundancies in fact most efficiently surveyed from the center? Symmetries seem most easily sampled by skipping the center and fixing the sides alternately. To sample the redundancies of cyclic repetition in the border design, one would best scan around the periphery rather than making multiple trips from the center to various points on the border. True, the entire border is kept in peripheral view best by fixing the center. Perhaps that peripheral view provides all the sample the perceiver needs, but this is hard to say, since nothing in the general concepts predicts how much is needed. The pull toward the center referred to by Gombrich seems real enough, but not explained by, because not plausibly implied by, the aim of efficiently sampling the redundant border.

For another example, consider how the vitiating effect of repetition in general relates to Gombrich's broader point, that we need not and do not inspect decorations for their details. Certainly, the latter doesn't imply the former. It's not just that we don't need to scrutinize the individual elements, but that the display resists our doing so, even when we try. Gombrich tries to relate this resistance to his general concepts by positing a kind of rivalry: "There must be a conflict, or at least a tension, between the two functions of perception to which we referred at the outset, the perception of things and the perception of order" (p. 151). But Gombrich's general concepts, even with this conflict added, still do not imply the repetition phenomenon, in particular that "thingness" would be the loser in cases of conflict. Why "thingness" is the loser, or indeed whether it always has to be, remains uncertain. Furthermore, Gombrich's proposal of conflict is confusing in another way. He seems to forget here what he maintains in discussing habit, that the perception of things also is part of the perception of order. The conflict is not between order and thing so much as between one kind of order, design narrowly taken, and another, familiarity.

Such difficulties arise not infrequently throughout The Sense of Order. Many explanations are not so readily filled out to yield plausible deductive accounts, and sometimes, as above, we have outright inconsistencies. Although Gombrich's particular and general concepts make a coherent overall picture, they do not lock together into a seamless explanatory structure. Such flaws should not be viewed as ruinous, however. On the contrary, one would hardly expect a tight scientific account of such a complex domain. Gombrich no doubt wrote his book somewhat like a decorative design, not to be scrutinized detail by detail anyway, and even incomplete explanations do valuable service in pointing the way to further inquiry. Moreover, a more conservative and cautious Gombrich might be one less worth having, if it costs the drive toward explanation, even though not always solid explanation, which so infuses The Sense of Order. And Gombrich himself is frank about the limits of what he attempts: "I am fully aware of the fact that speculations, as yet unsupported by controlled experiments, cannot qualify as psychological theories. But what starts as a mere 'hunch' can sometimes be turned into a scientific hypothesis in expert hands, and I have been so fortunate as to see this happen with informal suggestions I have put forward in the past" (p. ix). So Gombrich has issued this caveat emptor, and the reader should take heed.

A Note of the Explanandum

The explanandum in an explanation is the thing to be accounted for. It is, in Gombrich's The Sense of Order, a range of phenomena concerned with decorative design. But why this explanandum? Is this where we would like to see E. H. Gombrich investing his time and intelligence? To put the question that way is to show how unfair a question it is: Can an author not choose his own work? But to address the question anyway is to provide a little more perspective on what The Sense of Order attempts and what it eschews.

One thing Gombrich does not attempt is an account of aesthetic excellence in design. True, he describes the different attitudes which have prevailed toward such matters as functionalism, or as flatness versus three-dimensionality. True, he takes as central to quality a provocative balance between order and disorder. Certainly the abundant illustrations present to the reader many lovely examples of decoration. Yet Gombrich never tries to argue that this is superb and that abysmal according to the logic of his concepts. If Gombrich instructs us in the connoisseurship of decoration, it is in terms of what effects to see, not what values to apply. Some might consider this an appalling neglect of what is really important. But, instead, it might be considered the wisdom of explaining what can be explained and letting the rest go hang. As quoted earlier, Gombrich specifically acknowledges the difficulties of any general aesthetics of design. To this reviewer's mind, Gombrich is right: Particular differences in aesthetic quality defy any ready explanation by general principles. Rules of thumb can be given, of course, but as explanation, they fail the test of implication emphasized here, being too subject to exception.

Another thing Gombrich does not attempt is a general account of the visual phenomena of abstract art. True, Gombrich notes that the theories behind twenti-
eth-century abstract painting draw considerably on the debates about ornament in the nineteenth century. True, he occasionally offers contemporary abstractions as examples of some of the effects discussed. However, Gombrich draws a fundamental distinction between such matters and his aim: “Remembering my own normal reaction to decoration before I had embarked on this investigation, I was tempted to call this book 'The Unregarded Art.'... Painting, like speaking, implicitly demands attention whether or not it receives it. Decoration cannot make this demand. It normally depends for its effect on the fluctuating attention we can spare while we scan our surroundings” (p. 116).

So Gombrich, no great fan of abstract painting (1963), has chosen to complement his study of realistic representation in *Art and Illusion* with a study not of those abstractions and semiabstractions that hang on the important walls of important museums and mansions, but of the ones that hug coffee spoons and architectural columns, the ones we take for granted.

One could regret this. I confess myself to a moment of regret when, halfway through *The Sense of Order*, I happened to visit the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University. On display was a Calder piece, standing on the floor about chest high, its top a horizontal gesture of wires and metal plates pivoting on the base. For some reason, I found it wholly engaging. Not only did it allow, even compel, my regard, but it departed strikingly from the perceptual armamentarium of ornamental design. There was little repetition in a narrow sense. There was calculated asymmetry. The curvilinearities were complex, but within the reach of vision to know them one by one and all together, a feast for the eye where one could consume every dish, to reverse Gombrich’s expression. “This,” I said to myself, “has nothing to do with the sense of order.”

But in the end there were no regrets. The old saying about gift horses seems relevant here. E. H. Gombrich has made us his gift, and there is no need to grumble about how he could have done this or could have done that. He has, in fact, chosen a neglected corner of our vision and sought to illuminate it for us. The point is nicely made by the way he frames his discussion—with a discussion of a picture frame. At the close of his introduction, Gombrich has a few remarks to make about an elaborate picture frame, circa 1700, surrounding the *Madonna della Sedia* by Raphael.

Gombrich says, in part, “...on the face of it, it seems an extraordinarily pointless activity to expend so much skill and labour on carving and gilding these festoons with laurel leaves and berries, stretched between fictitious curly brackets of extraordinary elaboration, which fasten them between shell-shaped forms” (p. 15). But by the end of the last chapter, Gombrich is ready to return with his readers of more informed perception to this same frame. “To the reader who has shared this journey with me it should have looked progresively less puzzling. We recognize in it a version of the cartouche with four animated motifs oriented toward the field of force they enhance. They are progenies of Gorgon’s heads...” And so on. Yes, the frame has become more meaningful, one’s vision less naive, in consequence of the rite of passage imposed by *The Sense of Order*.

**Note**

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**Reviewed by Carla Sarett**

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That there is an essentially metaphorical component in many diverse realms of symbolic behavior has become a popular, and even fashionable, concept, and thus it seems particularly timely to consider some of the philosophical implications of the concept of metaphor itself. The publication of this latest collection of essays, which had originally appeared as an issue of *Critical Inquiry*, should serve to alert scholars to the richness of contemporary thinking on metaphor that can generally benefit discussions of symbolic phenomena. While much of the debate in this volume is aimed explicitly at problems in literary communication, this approach should not prevent a fruitful extension to related issues in other fields. Furthermore, the concept of metaphor is not only relevant to the objects we seek to understand but sheds considerable light on the very process of analysis. Metaphor, then, seems doubly relevant: It clarifies the structure of certain forms of symbolic communication and theories about communication as well.

Many readers, however, may encounter some difficulty in reading these essays: A good deal of knowl-
edge about metaphor as well as philosophy is by and large assumed; the reader approaching this book as an introduction will occasionally be both frustrated and baffled. On the other hand, the greater one’s exposure to the history of the debate on metaphor, the more certain is the feeling that the present collection does not significantly broaden the scope of that debate. Given the Foreword’s promise, one might have hoped that a truly interdisciplinary perspective would emerge. Such a perspective would gain theoretical sophistication and force from the recent contributions of theories on play, humor, ritual, and linguistic anthropology, to name but a few potentially exciting resources. Without in any way diminishing the value of aesthetic and literary theory to the subject of metaphor, it is fair to say that the exclusion of divergent points of view restricts the boundaries of the discussion. True, there are offerings from developmental psychology, art, and theology, but in crucial ways these accept the basic logic of the philosophical debate and do not change its shape in the way that, for example, Bateson’s communicational theory does (Bateson 1972). For that matter, certain philosophical objections to theories of meaning and literal language would gain momentum from recent developments in sociolinguistics, where notions of ordinary language have been attacked (cf. Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1976).

The collection can be thought of as addressing three basic, and not unrelated, questions. The first asks to what extent, and in what manner, metaphor can be said to possess cognitive content. This issue is best encountered in the essays by Paul Ricoeur and Donald Davidson, whose views stand in opposition to one another, but reverberations of it are heard throughout all the essays. In part, the second question forms a response to the first: To what extent can metaphor be best explained by its contextual use in social discourse? Here we find suggestions from psychology, philosophy, and rhetoric that much is to be gained from a context-dependent notion of metaphorical meaning. The other essays can be seen to explore the consequences that various root metaphors have in their respective disciplines and to pose the related question of whether there can exist a discourse not fundamentally permeated by metaphor.

Historically, the first question has been the crucial one, with centuries of scholars expelling metaphor from the province of cognitive discourse. Vico and the romantic movement posed the first vigorous challenge to this traditional prejudice, insisting that language’s original roots are primarily metaphorical and furthermore claiming a primacy of the poetic function in revealing the world as it is experienced; however, the romantic view still retained the traditional exclusion of metaphor from intellectual activity, even if it reversed the priority of that activity. It was in this century, perhaps when scientific discourse became increasingly self-conscious about its use of explanatory models, that the role of metaphor in cognition earned legitimacy. Most would locate the pivotal text as Max Black’s Models and Metaphors, in which the interaction theory of metaphor was proposed, claiming, among other things, that metaphor was not reducible to literal assertions and that metaphor does not so much formulate an antecedent similarity as create it.

In this intellectual era the notion of truth as created rather than discovered has found ready acceptance. Still, the status of such newly generated “meaning” or “truth” does remain problematic in relation to conventionally accepted, or literal, truths. One can reject metaphor in a way that is clearly forbidden with literal assertions, and the grounds on which one rejects the two differ in important ways. To participate in an imaginative vision is perhaps to gain certain insight, but tempered by the understanding that such insight may be rejected. Donald Davidson’s essay insists that we not confuse such insight with meaning. His claim is that there is no hidden message in metaphor apart from its literal meaning. Theories of metaphor have mistaken the effect of the metaphor, which is to stimulate and invite comparison, for an encoded content. “The common error,” claims Davidson, “is to fasten on the contents of the thoughts a metaphor provokes and to read these contents into the metaphor itself.” Such a hard-headed stance certainly makes a star of Davidson, prompting heated responses from such worthy opponents as Nelson Goodman and Max Black. The predictable problems of the ensuing dialogue result, in part, from highly divergent notions of “meaning” as well as “cognitive content.” Karsten Harries’s neat reminder that certain slang expressions (“He’s an ac/dc”) clearly do express cognitive content disposes of part of Davidson’s argument. Harries is subtle enough to realize, however, that to the extent that Davidson is dealing with more complex examples of poetic metaphor, he may indeed be onto something, since the “aboutness” of such metaphors is always elusive (cf. Sperber 1977).

Paul Ricoeur takes the position that metaphor does have the capacity to provide untranslatable information and yield true insights about reality, and that it has this capacity by virtue of certain psychological processes, those of imagination and feeling. His thesis, in brief, is that the metaphoric form of “split reference” is structurally analogous to the processes of imagination and feeling, which themselves constitute the complete metaphorical process. Both imagination and feeling involve a “suspension” of literal systems of reference and emotion by which we are able to maintain the tensional viewpoint required by metaphor and assimilate new meanings. The metaphorical process allows us to actively shape and participate in the creation and articulation of meaning in ways denied us by ordinary language, whose meanings have already
been given to us. In metaphor, the new semantic congruence is both "felt" and "seen," that is, "We are included in the process as knowing subjects" (p. 154). Through this, we become aware of aspects of reality "which cannot be expressed in terms of the objects referred to in ordinary language" (p 156). While Ricoeur's debt to Heidegger is clear, his theory also bears interesting similarities to Michael Polanyi's theory of knowledge in *The Tacit Dimension*, and a comparison of Polanyi's "tacit knowing" to Ricoeur's metaphorical process might further illuminate the question of how metaphor functions in cognition.

So intriguing are the structural properties of metaphor that they have overshadowed other aspects of the picture. Recently, however, theorists have shifted from a purely semantic approach to one focusing on contextual features and the relationship between the speakers, touching upon the interrelationship between systems of signification and communication. The essays by Cohen, Davidson, and Booth reflect this trend with varying degrees of success.

Ted Cohen's essay reflects the problem alluded to earlier, that of a philosophy unaided by theoretical positions on human communication. He is vulnerable to this charge for the simple reason that his analysis, dealing with the establishment of intimacy through metaphor, might have benefited greatly from such theory. Cohen finds metaphors like jokes in that they both presuppose prior knowledge on the part of the speakers, and both serve to establish a sense of bonding from the acknowledgment of such knowledge. Literature on humor enlightens us as to the multiple complexities of such relationships, making Cohen's analysis seem oddly naïve (Fry 1963).

Wayne Booth's discussion of metaphor from the traditional approach of rhetoric is a refreshing reminder that the functional perspective on language did not arise with speech act theory; furthermore, his definition of metaphor as "all symbolic inventions that are intended to be taken nonliterally" permits him an admirably broad vision of the subject (p. 50).

The power of contextual factors is given empirical support from developmental studies of metaphorical competence. Howard Gardner and Ellen Winner suggest that children's understanding of metaphors is enhanced by embedding them in a situational context rather than drawing upon prior lexical knowledge. Also of interest are their studies of brain-damaged patients, which raise intriguing possibilities. Asked to match simple tropes with appropriate pictures, aphasics were able to make the correct selection while remaining incapable of paraphrasing the same metaphor; right-hemisphere patients, on the other hand, displayed the opposite tendency and offered accurate paraphrase with no corresponding ability to select the appropriate picture. Gardner and Winner conclude that "the neuropsychological evidence suggests that both the pragmatic and featural perspectives, taken together, have some validity, with the crucial variable being the kinds of tasks posed and responses required" (p. 138).

The remainder of the essays illustrate how metaphor permeates different realms of social discourse. Paul de Man's reading of Locke, Condillac, and Kant finds their philosophical positions on metaphor fraught with figurative language. Analyzing these metaphors as a result of particular rhetorical strategies, he concludes that philosophy "to the extent that it is dependent on figuration" is literary, and cannot be understood properly unless such repressed metaphors are laid bare. Karsten Harries similarly calls attention to Heidegger's writings on the ways metaphor shapes philosophy, making "explicit the fact that philosophical texts refer us less to reality than back to other philosophical texts" (p. 83).

It should be emphasized that to admit the metaphorical component in disciplines such as science or philosophy does not impoverish the theories they generate. Granted, the presence of repressed metaphor alerts us to certain normative commitments, but this should not diminish our appreciation of the explanatory function of models in general. Nor should it commit us to the hapless relativism that scientific theories are, at best, arbitrary fictions. As Karsten Harries argues, the modern recognition of the impossibility of an unmediated reality does not render the belief in objectivity itself meaningless. On the contrary, the very ability to identify, analyze, and evaluate individual perspectives leads us to pursue a viewpoint which would permit a truly objective means of encountering reality. Lacking any belief in this possibility would undermine the basis of scientific knowledge altogether (Polanyi 1967). Furthermore the commitment to objectivity demands that we explore scientific models in terms of what they can reveal and explain about observed phenomena (Hesse 1966:162). By affirming the legitimate role metaphor plays in intellectual activity, we can better understand the insights and achievements of scientific theory, not confusing theory with literal description or carelessly rejecting it in the name of relativism.

The role of metaphor is further clarified by David Tracy's detailed account of religious and theological use of metaphor. Although a reader's unfamiliarity with contemporary theology may make Tracy's a particularly difficult essay, it is worth reading for its successful integration of the interaction theory of metaphor with concrete textual analysis. Arguing that the study of metaphor is central to the understanding of religious experience and thinking, Tracy notes:

The statement "God is love" does not say literally what God is, but produces a metaphorical meaning for what God is like. In this redescriptive sense, the statement defines who, for the Christian, God is. [p. 103]
Tracy convincingly demonstrates that a view of metaphor that refuses its capacity to generate new meanings cannot do justice to the role metaphor plays in religious thinking.

Caution must be taken, though, in extending Tracy’s analysis to a more general notion of the truth value of metaphor. In the case of Scripture, it seems clear that metaphor does indeed help to establish a world. But, one is forced to wonder with Karsten Harries, “to what extent does the scriptural paradigm help to illuminate poetry in general and, more especially, the poetry of this godless age?” (p. 172). Harries argues that contemporary poetry as well as art stands in a radically different relation to reality than do the words of Scripture, consequently producing a different use of metaphor. His discussion traces some of the movements in notions of poetic unity and metaphor. He locates the telling moment in the transition from the traditional mimetic theory, which viewed art as about reality and saw its object as potentially transcending human understanding, to the aesthetic view of art, which insists that art be autotelic and resistant to mimesis. Referentiality, according to the aesthetic view, threatens the telos of the work of art insofar as it relates to a reality outside art. Thus, the purpose of art is to be a “thing” in the world, to resist its own inherently metaphorical structure. The work of art is always at once a material object and a communication, but the pursuit of presence seeks, in effect, to repress the latter. Insofar as referentiality seems to be unavoidable, the pursuit of such presence inevitably creates a tension, which Harries relates to the prevalence of collision metaphor in modern poetry, where ordinary meanings of words are subverted altogether. The paradoxical reversal of this is that as poetry, as well as art, approaches this extreme denial of meaning it may acquire a revelatory power all its own: from the ruins of literal sense emerges not a new semantic congruence but a silence that is heard as the language of transcendence. (p. 172)

Furthermore, Harries’s hermeneutical account makes it clear that metaphor is not always best confined to the domain of pragmatics and the “overly restricted theory of meaning on which it rests” (p. 169). A theory of meaning that denies that sedimentation of rich meanings that attach themselves to words and symbols also denies us access to the potentialities of artistic and poetic works. There is a peculiar process at work when these associations are declared somehow less “real” than univocal meanings. It is important to note that such deliberations about meaning do not have merely philosophical consequences, especially for those of us who are interested in artistic interpretation. Not only is the potential meaning of a text a fundamental presupposition upon which acts of interpretational rest; it is also the case that textual analysis, by suppressing the availability of multivocal interpretation, is restricted and, in many cases, unjustified. Our commonsense notions inform us that we can “miss the point” of a metaphor, a film, or a painting, and we believe that additional information and knowledge can enlighten us. Lacking such notions, art historical interpretation becomes absurd. Thus, the question of metaphor is inevitably drawn back into the larger issues of meaning and communication which must support it.

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As the interest of social scientists in the expressive forms of culture increases, new methods are needed to analyze these forms on a scientific basis. Researchers in dance and body movement have such a tool in Labanotation, a rigorous and highly developed system for the analysis and notation of all forms of movement. Labanotation (Hutchinson 1954) is the trade name for a system of movement notation developed by Rudolf Laban, a dance educator-scholar born in Bratislava in 1879 (Thorton 1971), who revolutionized the dance world through both his philosophy of movement and his pragmatic approaches to movement-related problems. Nahumck has presented us with an introduction to this system designed for dancer and re-
searcher. Her book is divided into two sections: a brief description of the basic symbols of Labanotation and how they are used, and a discussion of ways to perceive overall patterning in dance. I aim to evaluate the goals and accomplishments of these sections and explore some theoretical implications of the concept "dance literacy."

After a brief history of dance notational systems, Nahumck describes the use of the vertical staff of Labanotation and the symbols which simultaneously convey information on direction, level, and timing of movements:

This section is designated as an introduction for dancers, choreographers, researchers—all dance interested people who are beginning to recognize the urgency for moving the study of dance out of the "oral" tradition and into a literate one. [p. 10]

My inference from this and other statements is that it should be possible for an interested researcher who has never before seen a page of Labanotation to pick up this book and become "literate" in dance, even though Nahumck encourages further study for those desiring expertise in the system. If this is indeed the goal of the book, it does not quite succeed. And while it is true that the reader can learn a great deal about the structure of Labanotation from this book, it is not sufficiently explicit for a novice to learn to manipulate this complex system.

The major reason for this problem is Nahumck's lack of attention to the nature of Labanotation—that it is a movement-based system with categories conceptually derived directly from movement experience. The logical outcome of this fact is that to learn Labanotation one must not only read it but also move it: without direct kinesthetic experience the concepts of Labanotation cannot be mastered. My assumption is that Nahumck, because of her experience in teaching Labanotation, understands this problem. Yet the omission of any discussion of the need for movement experience as a basis for gaining "competence in the techniques for recognising dance patterns" (p. 9) has seriously weakened her presentation.

The elegance of Laban's system is a result of the precision with which the movement-based concepts are defined. Nahumck's book encourages the reader to begin practice-writing before providing an adequate base for the understanding of this conceptual precision—a major flaw. For example, in the early stages of learning Labanotation, an important distinction must be made between writing in terms of motion (a movement away from a starting point) and destination (a transition to an established point in space) (Hackney et al. 1970). The lack of attention to this conceptual distinction would confuse readers who, seeing the same symbols used in different columns, have no basis for understanding the difference in their interpretation.

The second part of the book is concerned with the formation of movement patterns along five dimensions: rhythmic patterns, ground paths, kinetic patterns, effort patterns, and space-consequent shapes. This part is derived not only from Labanotation but touches also on other parts of Laban's theory (1947, 1966). It emphasizes the perception of movement patterns and the necessity for acquiring skill in this perceptual ability for accurate notation to be possible. By using sucharranging examples as childrens' street games and ethnic dances from Spain, Africa, and the Philippines, Nahumck demonstrates how Labanotation fits with a musical score and how the system is sufficiently detailed and flexible to deal comprehensively with movement styles, such as African, that are totally different from those with which its creator was most familiar.

As a workbook this section presents some problems. Each chapter is questions for review, most of which are designed to test readers' understanding of the material. Some, however, are research questions for the reader to put to his own data source, and their inclusion in a review section is confusing. Practice staves are also present in these chapters. They would be more useful accompanied by graded excercises so that the reader could attempt some specific task and measure his performance in some way. Another problem may arise as the reader tries to work through some of the notated examples. There is no sequential presentation of the symbols which would allow the reader to assimilate them in a logical order. Instead, each symbol is defined below the score in which it is first used. The result of this is that the examples seem more complex than they are, and are difficult for a beginner to follow even though they are accompanied by a verbal description of the movement.

Since Nahumck directs her book in part to researchers, it must also be evaluated through the use of criteria of theoretical importance to this group. In particular, her use of the term "dance literacy" and its implications should be of interest to all communication researchers. She defines dance literacy as competence in the techniques for recognizing dance patterns—physical shapes, rhythms, spatial patterns, dynamics—as combinations of basic elements which, in infinite variations, produce the magical symbolic "statements" that transform ordinary movements into dance. The term also includes skill in reading and writing choreography in its own symbolic language without interposition of verbal descriptions. [p. 9]
Nahumck's reason for using "dance literacy" remains unclear. She may be intending a metaphorical interpretation referring to the ability of Labanotation to record movement in written form. But the term "literacy" commonly applies to a specific skill, whereas in Nahumck's usage a whole series of operations and abilities seems to be implied. For instance, the reader cannot be sure from the text whether practitioners of other notation systems, such as Benesh, are considered to be "dance literate." The term thus raises more problems than it can solve and does not appropriately represent the conceptual system to which Nahumck refers.

From a theoretical perspective, the term "literacy" posits an analogy between the systems of dance and language that is more significant than comparing only the notational systems devised for each. This analogy leads directly to the implication that a linguistic model is appropriate for the study of dance and, by extension, all movement. While this notion is not a new one in studies of either dance (Kaeppler 1972) or body movement (Birdwhistell 1970), it is still arguable. Nahumck's lack of comment on the implications of her terminology may indicate a lack of interest in broader theoretical concerns. But it is clearly necessary for communication theorists to deal with these issues.

The analogy between language and dance must be qualified by an understanding of each as a separate mode of communication in which the symbolic meaning of one mode is not directly translatable to another. Gross (1973) defines a mode of symbolic behavior as:

> a system of potential actions and operations (external and internal) in terms of which objects and events can be perceived, coded cognitively for long term storage and retrieval, subjected to transformations and orderings, and organized into forms that can elicit meaningful inferences (of whatever level of consciousness) by the creator and/or others who possess competence in the same mode.

Gross (1973:191)

He distinguishes five primary modes of symbolic behavior: the lexical, socio-gestural, iconic, logico-mathematical, and musical, while allowing for derived modes that build on the primary ones, in which category he includes dance. In the socio-gestural mode, which is in part based on movement, knowledge of a specific gestural code is not sufficient for competence in that mode, since other social/interactive symbols (such as social conventions) are also involved. Conversely, the range of possible experience in the perception of the kinesthetic sense is not encompassed by this mode. In fact, the kinesthetic sense is relatively neglected in Gross' scheme. I would therefore postulate a sixth mode of symbolic competence—the kinesthetic. Again following Gross:

> The ability to comprehend symbolic meaning, then, depends upon the acquisition of competence in the mode in which that meaning exists. Like all knowledge and skill, that competence can only be achieved through action.

Gross (1975:28)

Part of the development of competence in the kinesthetic mode must include an understanding of the individual's own body potential: along which axis is he most comfortable in moving, and which combinations of qualities are most common in his movement repertoire. Without this knowledge, total comprehension of the movement styles of others is not possible. And yet there is no corollary of this necessity in any other symbolic mode. This quality alone should be sufficient to distinguish the kinesthetic as a separate, non-translatable symbolic mode.

I would argue that movement is a qualitatively different system than language, and therefore the concept of dance literacy is inadequate. The symbols used in Labanotation represent discrete units of a movement sequence, but these units are complex composites of many dimensions, not at all analogous to linguistic phonemes. It is necessary for the movement analyst to gain competence in dealing with these units—in isolating their components and in understanding how they combine to form more complex statements. But this competence cannot be gained by merely observing movement sequences or learning to "read" a symbolic transcription which represents these sequences. Competence in dance analysis implies the ability to experience visually, aurally, kinesthetically, and rhythmically the dimensions of a movement sequence. It does not mean that the analyst must be a professional dancer, for these analytic skills can be learned by anyone willing to spend the necessary time and energy. But movement competence does require more than learning to read symbols. It requires both physical and intellectual participation in the analysis of movement sequences into their component units, and a heightened self-awareness of one's own movement repertoire.

If we accept the existence of the kinesthetic mode, it should be apparent that symbolic understanding within that mode cannot be gained only by reference to a coexistent linguistic code. A semiotic model, with its focus on the sign system within the mode, would be more appropriate than a linguistic one for analyzing meaning in dance. "The 'essence' of a specific symbolic message will only be appreciated within the code in which it was created" (Gross 1973:193). Thus for the analyst a new and fundamentally different form of gaining competence in the kinesthetic mode must be used. Laban's system has the potential for helping one to develop this competence through an active understanding of symbolic statements in the kinesthetic mode. Thus in a literal sense the label of "dance literacy" for this system is inadequate to express the un-
derlying assumptions of the system or the powerful analytic capacity that it has.

Nahumck is successful in this book to the extent that she introduces Laban’s concepts and gives the reader some idea of the scope and conceptual power of his system. She clearly documents her belief, which I share, in the primacy of Laban’s system as the most precise one available for analyzing movement in its own terms. The book is particularly useful for readers interested in a purely structural application of the notation system independent of the kinesthetic context, such as the comparative analysis of the steps of two related dance forms. A dancer looking for a shorthand for writing choreography would also find this book useful, as would a student of another notation system looking for comparative material. But it is only through rigorous study of Laban’s work that its full potential for movement research can be realized.

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Barbara Rosenblum’s illuminating study succeeds at tying photographic style in specific ways to the social organization of photographers at work. Style, she argues, is “a deposit of the work role” (p. 113). Moreover, “distinctive social processes dominate each setting where pictures are made and they affect what photographers can and cannot do, what kinds of images they can and cannot make, what kinds of visual data they can include in the picture or leave out” (pp. 1–2). The division of labor, technology, photographer-client relations, audience expectations, and control over work processes interact to fashion largely autonomous “worlds” (p. 19) of photographic custom and practice, worlds to which we gain entry via Rosenblum’s report of her participant observation at three work settings. In her comparison of the ways in which news, advertising, and fine arts photographers make pictures, “the relationships between photographic style and social structure setting can be seen” (p. 2).

In these three spheres neophyte photographers are socialized into different work roles (what novices might know about picturemaking before this explicit socialization is not discussed). As apprentices, news photographers learn to be unobtrusive; they learn to anticipate sequences of social action so as to be able to plan their next shot; they internalize news values and learn to negotiate a fit between their pictures and the stories they may accompany. As assistants to established advertising photographers, newcomers learn to manage shooting situations: where to obtain special materials, how to make creases in satin look “right,” how to keep models relaxed, how to take orders from agency art directors and clients. At school fine-arts photographers learn that photography is a visual art and that, somehow, their pictures should both unveil and bear witness to their own individuality.

We learn a good deal about the ways photographers go about their work. News photographers on the night shift generally cover different sorts of events than their colleagues on day work. Rather than the prescheduled events of day—press conferences, fashion shows, baseball games—at night “good human interest material . . . the birth of a baby . . . murder, fire, death” take precedence (p. 49).

News photographs, too, often function as a record that
an event has in fact occurred. As one informant puts it: “With a picture, it’s either there or not there. No bullshit. No reporter making up a story” (p. 22). “Getting the picture,” if it is a good picture, means getting the story (p. 47); and the veracity of the photograph remains pristine even as the photographer is in practice subordinated to conventional journalistic storylines. In the similarly restrictive domain of the advertising photographer the chief job is to translate sketches supplied by advertising agencies into conventional photographic terms. Here creativity is seen to lie in “the solution to a technical problem for which there are no standardized solutions” (p. 84): how to shoot a toy castle underwater; literally, how to make the product shine. Advertising photographers thus derive concepts of creativity from their need to produce “original standard pictures” (p. 81)—photographs whose technical brilliance permits expression of the client’s design. News photographers, however, may explain creativity in terms of a search for new angles when covering well-worn faces; and fine-arts photographers use creativity as a badge of their individuality by finding “original,” often difficult or dangerous shots, or by printing in unexpected ways.

Style “is not the outcome of the history of the rules of a form” Rosenblum observes (p. 111), and her study reinstates a valuable empirical emphasis on the actual processes through which cultural forms are hammered out. If I find some problems with Rosenblum’s conceptualization of style (which I will discuss below), they are secondary to her substantial contribution to our knowledge of the structured practices of photographers in American society.

We might have learned more from this book had a larger number of illustrations been included. A few photographs, chosen to exemplify broad stylistic differences between news, advertising, and fine-arts photography, find their way into the text. Yet there are many occasions where visual information is pertinent and some where the argument is damaged by its absence. The reader is too often shut off from good ethnographic data, and omission of illustrative resources obliges Rosenblum to shut doors which should have remained open. To take one major example, she states (p. 43) that “understanding the differences between newspapers, with regard to their definitions of the ‘news,’ is the first step in understanding the picture assignment process and the picture selection process.” A paper’s “general editorial attitude,” she continues (p. 43), varies in accordance with “what news fits the image of the paper, and what kind of treatment of news items the editors think the readers expect of that paper.” But what do these differences actually look like? How, specifically, does “general editorial attitude” impinge on the production and style of photographs, and how does its impact vary as one moves from journal to journal and from one end of the generic style (“news photography”) to another? Might not the tabloid and the prestige press, for example, diverge along a photographic dimension, as they so evidently do across conventional axes of content and visual form? Unaccompanied by photographic illustrations, Rosenblum’s single example, a grisly murder, cannot provide an answer.

More serious, Rosenblum relinquishes any attempt to link such generic variation to the pattern of social stratification which pervades American society. Might not the styles of picturemaking employed by different newspapers be related to social structural differences between their publics? Can work practices not be seen as unfolding a graded series of photographic styles in relation to disparate audiences?

Rosenblum acknowledges that “the specificity of the audience” is a very important variable, one which is based on structural features of social systems” (p. 125). However, she then asserts that for news and advertising photographers a “primary audience” is comprised of “significant others,” who make the “stop-and-go decisions along the distribution channel” (p. 118) and who, therefore, take analytic precedence over the “general public.” In brief, the audience and its expectations are incorporated into the work organization itself: One produces for colleagues and editors, or for an ad agency art director and the client, rather than for any ultimate public. This is a valid and important argument, which has been developed at greater length in recent work on the production of news (Golding and Elliott 1979; Schlesinger 1978). It underscores the insight that in systems of industrial cultural production the interaction between producers and audiences tends to be uneven, with power held asymmetrically at the producing end. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that circulation and sales managers, with their market research staffs, are far from blind to the “demographics” which herald the interaction between style and audience penetration. Abolishing the audience by fiat segregates the newspaper from the context which, ultimately, underpins much of its cultural meaning.

Inattentiveness to the audience, therefore, allows style to become what it patently is not: a thing, “a deposit of the work role” (p. 113). As social structure disappears, work role and, by extension, style itself become pure expressions of organizational or institutional requirements.

In actuality differences exist between individual practitioners, or between subgroups, even in the most bureaucratic and routinized organizations—and these differences may be substantial. Among news people, for instance, Janowitz (1975) has argued that “gatekeepers” and “advocates” are disposed to project distinct journalistic styles: factual, objective, or neutral, on the one hand, and committed or partisan on the other. Cantor’s (1971) study of Hollywood TV pro-
ducers is similarly able to isolate divergent types, the bases for which are sought in past career history and experience. Are there really no photographers at any of Rosenblum’s three settings who oppose dominant concepts of creativity? Are there none who cling to alternative, but still acceptable, styles of picturemaking, be they residual or emergent (Williams 1973)? What are the patterns and bases of variation within the work role, and how do these interact with style?

Work role grants too much weight to the reality of an ideal typical photographer’s experience. Not only does this tend to blur individual differences, it also accepts the perspective of the individual photographer as the most valid analytical standpoint. For the lone photographer working in a complex organization, however, much that may seem to be immutable may in fact be organizationally contingent. To imply, for example, that “technology”—in this case automated photographic processing equipment used by newspapers—does not encourage the news photographer to trouble about printing his own pictures, or to worry much about their final appearance, may be correct, but it obscures a somewhat different structural reality. As Rosenblum notes, it is deadlines that favor the use of high-speed photoprocessing equipment capable of churning out reproducible images in a matter of minutes. Deadlines, though, themselves express the newspapers’ economic character. Contrary to Rosenblum’s argument, news certainly is not the newspapers’ “main product” (p. 41); news is news because it is necessary to have something to fill the space between the advertisements which are slotted en masse, in advance, into each day’s projected paper (cf. Tuchman 1978:15–16). As Fazey (1977:6) explains, display advertising is all-important in its effect on the type of newspaper that is produced. Advertising market considerations, in fact, create the large, multi-section newspaper, where the advertisers’ perception of the editorial function is conditioned by the need to turn the reader onto the page which the advertiser has bought almost in its entirety. A three-quarter column turn from page A1 fills this need admirably.

Although “‘technology is always enmeshed in an economic, political and ideological system’” (p.115), it is vital to ask and to find out how.

Reliance on work role is, finally, symptomatic of a troubling tendency to gloss over the fundamental distinction between collective and individual or craft production. Indeed, a number of crucial concepts—creativity, alienation, and style—are skewed uncritically toward individual rather than collective modes. Alienation, for example, is seen to result from a lack of control over work, from start to finish, from conceptualization to execution to ultimate audience reception. Well and good. “Control” itself, however, is too automatically referred back to isolated actors: “... individual labor, not social labor, is a necessity for artistic production because it insures the possibility of working in a craft mode, in which thinking and doing are united” (p. 124). Why is such unity to be required only by artists? And might not thinking and doing ever be united in collective production? Rosenblum’s answer is a retreat across a full century of practice and discussion. The use of craft production as an ideal points up fine-arts photography as a relatively attractive current style of work, and Rosenblum seems to insinuate that collective production itself may be the source of alienation, in the form of “aspects of modern work organization such as deadlines or routinization” (p. 124). Deadlines, I have pointed out, at least in newspaper offices, express a specific form of collective organization, and must not be confused with collective production per se; and it is far from clear in what ways routinization, taken alone, could engender alienation. Again, Rosenblum does not hesitate to assert, in support of fine-arts photography, that “unregulated competition may stimulate the creation of innovative imagery” (p. 120), because the free market, with its relatively diffuse expectations concerning works of art, permits “a greater possibility of imposing one’s unique vision and one’s own aesthetic preferences on a work of art” (p. 127). Has the author not permitted the obsessive concern for individuality evinced by many of her fine-arts photographers to dictate the boundaries of her own discussion? Diffuse expectations, in any case, are not identical to elastic or tolerant or far-ranging ones, as Rosenblum herself soundly shows: “... the strength of the market’s influence is evident when we realize how few photographic traditions are defined as fine art, compared to the vast number of original portfolios that are submitted to curators and gallery owners each month” (pp. 108–109). Before she praised the free market, might it not have been advisable for her to find out what proportion of fine-arts photographs actually are sold through galleries and what proportion manage, in a not-so-very-free market, to elude these powerful arbiters of taste? How do we know that the diversity of style in fine-arts photography, along with the monolithic style of news photography, is not apparent only, a mere artifact of the author’s enchantment with individual production and individual experience?

Three main weaknesses, therefore, afflict the concept of style advanced by Rosenblum. First, its stress on work role obscures our view of individual differences and, occasionally, structural constraints within organizations where photography is practiced. Second, style embraces neither generic nor inter-organizational variation nor, again, the distinction between individual and collective forms of production. Finally, the relationships between such variation and the social location of work practices are not examined;
style is not viewed as an interaction between organizations and the people outside them. Objections aside, however, *Photographers at Work* makes photography a more comprehensible practice.

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**Reviewed by Michael Intintoli**

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**Mass-Mediated Culture** is a useful book, but perhaps not in the way the author intended. As an effort to synthesize a vast literature on a mass communication and culture, the book touches on a number of issues basic to the study of complex society and mass communication. In doing so, it demonstrates the importance of developing an anthropology of mass communication and media.

The book is an ambitious undertaking. In 280 pages Real proposes a theoretical framework for the study of mass-mediated culture, which he defines as "expressions of culture as they are received from contemporary media, whether they arise from elite, folk, popular or mass origins" (p. 14), summarizes much of the literature on mass communication, describes and justifies his methodology, presents several case studies, and expects the reader to create a setting in which the "liberating potential" of media could be realized. The core of his argument is that mass-mediated culture is a crucial link between the material setting and institutional structure of a society and the character of consciousness and symbol system of that society. To support and illustrate his contention Real presents case studies of Disneyland, the Super Bowl, medical programs on television, a Billy Graham crusade, a presidential campaign, and an Aymara fiesta in the Andes. He justifies this choice of topics, arguing that they are "focused on a specific event or person as a dominant and widespread cultural expression that continues over a period of years, represents a major institutional area or subsystem of society and is significant as an expression of a total cultural system" (p. 37).

In a brief section of three pages, Real describes the "methodologies" of functionalism, structuralism, and aesthetics and says that all three are necessary for an adequate understanding of mass-mediated culture. He then, just as briefly, characterizes his approach — without, however, integrating in any systematic way the proposed theory, methodologies, and research techniques. He labels his approach ethnographic, exegetical, typological, cross-cultural, critical, and policy oriented.

*Ethnography...* identifies an experience in exact detail together with historical and other necessary factual background. ... *Exegis...* identifies the precise meaning of the experience both intensively in itself and extensively in its association. When well executed, the two define what an individual case typifies about a culture. The *cross-cultural* comparisons are most evident in the Aymara study, which compares and contrasts characteristic structures of a non-mediated culture with the culture represented in the other case studies. *Critical procedures* seek precise understanding of subtle associations, implications and problem areas. They seek both positive appreciation and negative sensitizing to potential exploitation and unconscious excess. ... A final procedure in these studies points beyond understanding only and suggests appropriate and constructive responses. [p. 36]

The six case studies follow. While Real uses a wide range of approaches, cites an extensive literature, and has chosen varied topics, the results are limited and repetitive. Each chapter hammers home the theme that mass-mediated culture "primarily serves the interests of the relatively small political-economic power elite that sits atop the social pyramid." Disneyland represents "utopian typifications" and instructs through "morality plays that structure personal values and ideology." The study of the Super Bowl approaches it as a mythic spectacle, emphasizing dominant American institutions and ideology. Televised medical programs are examined by use of the concepts "genre" and "formula." A major conclusion is that the programs support cultural notions of health, glorify and protect the interests of doctors, and fail to make available to the public useful information on health and illness. The following chapter on a presidential campaign concludes that the current political communication system represents an "authoritarian use of mass-mediated
culture to manipulate and mislead people." The study of Billy Graham again emphasizes how mass-mediated culture supports dominant institutions and ideology. The final chapter on the Aymara Indians is offered as a contrast to mass-mediated culture, within the conventions of contrasts between traditional and modernized societies, updated with references to communication and forms of consciousness. Real, not surprisingly, finds that his case studies support his "hypotheses" that mass-mediated culture "reflect[s] the political economy, channel[s] popular tastes, and cause[s] individual and social effects" (p. 248). Needless to say, such hypotheses are uninformative.

Finally, Real argues for the development of what he calls "cultural studies," following Carey (1975) and Williams (1974). Such studies would avoid the errors of positivism and scientism that have characterized the dominant trend in American research on mass communication. Culture is to be viewed as "expressive," and with this orientation Real contends that we can examine the ways in which expressive forms are related to historical and social conditions and the ways in which they create patterns of meaning and significance. Human behavior is to be read as a text in context:

The text of cultural studies is human action and symbols broadly conceived; the context is the set of historical and institutional arrangements that structure action and symbols in a particular way in a given society. [p. 240]

He concludes with suggestions for the development of a critical theory of mass communication which can lead to an emancipated use of media, as opposed to the current predominantly repressive use.

Real makes reference to a vast literature and specifically cites the work of several anthropologists. The citations generally occur, however, when Real is attempting to justify the notion that places, performances, and programs have mythic or ritualistic functions. He also makes use of what might be called aspects of an anthropological perspective in that he does attempt to be theoretical and systematic in his conception of the workings of a sociocultural system. His general failure to do so accounts for the superficiality and misleading character of his work.

It should not be necessary to describe and justify an anthropology of media or mass communication at this late date; indeed, one can hardly be said to exist. Anthropologists, with few exceptions, have fundamentally avoided joining virtually all the other disciplines relevant to the study of mass communication. There are a number of reasons for this which are worth mentioning since they have implications for the general orientation of anthropology in the future. The following observation was made over ten years ago:

Viewed in a broader context . . . mass communication is by no means an exclusive feature of modern life, but merely a new form and further development of social communication, present in every culture. But this phenomena, as such, has also been virtually ignored by traditional anthropology. It is either regarded as an intrinsic element of culture that need not be considered as a separate aspect, or else it is taken for granted as a 'universal' without significant intercultural variation. That latter standpoint is particularly dubious. [Peck 1967:68]

In large measure, the failure of anthropologists to grasp the signficance of the study of mass communication is part of a larger failure to deal with communication as a social activity. Anthropologists have tended to focus on language, its structure, or its relationship to culture and thought (Hymes 1967), with the exception of early work by Mead and Bateson. Sociolinguistics and sociovistics (Chalfen 1974) can be understood as recent efforts to correct this failure.

Anthropologists have also tended to overlook change via the mass media, as well as change in general, as they described or, better, created the "anthropological present" and/or used functional approaches. From such a perspective mass media and communication would be disruptive or corrupting to the ideal or idealized traditional way of life (Peck 1967). Perhaps an analogous tendency in the study of complex societies has been to romanticize the marginal people we tend to study. There has been little systematic research on mass communication and the uses of communication media in traditional societies. Two exceptions are Keesing's study of a Samoan elite cited in Peck (1967) and Powdermaker's study of media use among Africans working on the Copperbelt of northern Rhodesia (1962).

With respect to the study of communicators in complex society, Powdermaker's (1950) study of Hollywood film production stands alone. It is interesting to note that the study was one of the first by any type of social scientist to consider carefully the role of the communicator in context. Also, there is Mead and Metraux's The Study of Culture at a Distance (1953), which is a compilation of content analyses undertaken to determine cultural and character patterns and their interrelationships. Recently there have been signs of a renewed interest in mass communication content, with several studies approaching mass communication content as myth (Denby 1971; Maranda 1972; Landers 1974), and a call for the study of mass communication and media use (Worth 1974; Eisein and Topper 1978; Chalfen 1978), but little follow-up.

I suggest that anthropologists can contribute to the study of mass communication by using Mass-Mediated Culture as an example of the unsuccessful and incomplete use of an anthropological perspective. Such a perspective involves a set of interrelated conceptual and methodological assumptions and constructs which
provide an ideal set of tools for the study of mass and mediated communication. Fundamentally, the perspective involves (1) a generalized framework of biocultural or sociocultural systems and/or evolution; (2) the theoretical development of the concept of culture; and as a result of these primary orientations, (3) an emphasis on cross-cultural studies of (4) natural systems of behavior, which (5) rely on participant observation and (6) reflect the awareness of the characteristics of culture in a distinction between native and observer's viewpoints. An integral element is the use of ethnographic research to develop a cumulative and wide-ranging body of data for the development of hypotheses and their support or refutation. The perspective, in my view, allows anthropologists to study both objective and subjective dimensions of behavior and add to an increasingly powerful and precise set of statements relating meanings and their settings.

The relevance of such a perspective is apparent when Real proceeds with the study of mass-mediated culture without first distinguishing the problematic relationships between symbolic and social systems. The existence of mediated symbolic communication and variegated publics and producers renders any reductive orientation misleading. The degree of conceptual and methodological confusions is evident in Real's discussion of his study of the Billy Graham campaign. I choose this example, not simply because it involves a mistaken notion of ethnography, but as an illustration of why and how the anthropological compilation of ethnographies of communication is imperative. Real labels his approach "ethnographic," but he actually relied upon six one-hour Graham telecasts that were videotaped. His defense of his use of the videotapes as ethnographies exposes his oversimplification of the communication process. To the objection that videotaped telecast is not a "direct expression of human behavior but only a record of an edited and disseminated partial version of behavior" he answers that all behavior is "edited" and contact with mediated communication has an influence or impact "directly paralleling direct personal contact." He goes on to make the following case:

Moreover, the customs, rituals, and culture portrayed in the sounds and moving images coming from speakers and screens, because of the pre-editing to fit the tastes of and to link together millions, are themselves virtually ethnographic reflections of cultural regularities. A second objection is that the telecast itself is not completely self-explanatory and that only the study of the people making (sic) television or receiving it is genuine social science. It is true that intention and social context are important. Nevertheless, the focus of cultural investigation is obviously on that point of impact mediated message. . . . Popular television may present a distorted picture of social behavior, but because the most commercially successful social distortions are always toward the mass norm, television offers a view of social behavior that is more, not less, representative of the tendencies and regularities of a society. In that sense, ethnographic records of mass-mediated culture are at least as valid as ethnographic records of nonmediated individual [sic] and group culture. [p. 171]

I have difficulty in following Real's argument, but he seems to argue that the content of the videotape presentation is similar to the nonmediated behavior or events it is "about"—both are edited, both have an impact, both are characterized by regularities. Therefore we can use the videotaped presentation as we would the observations made of the nonmediated behavior, the assumption being that the differences between the two are insignificant! As part of the same argument Real goes on to say that television may present a distorted picture of social behavior, but that the distortions are "toward the mass norm," thus representative of the "tendencies and regularities of a society." What he means by a "distorted picture" and "toward the mass norm" are unclear to me. When he contends that what is presented on television is both distorted and representative of the behavior the programs are about, it is difficult to resolve the contradiction. Again, we are asked to take the videotaped performance as a "reflection" of the behavior the presentation is about, but with the proviso that the picture is distorted. How it is distorted and what it is a distortion of is never made clear.

Real then goes on to dismiss the study of context and intention by stating that our focus of study should be on the "point of impact media message." What he means by the phrase is again unclear to me, but he implies the impact of the communication is in the text itself as if the message can be determined independent of the symbolic interactional process. To do so is to deny the active role of the viewer or user of a presentation and the importance of the strategy of interpretation that is used (Worth and Gross 1974) and to oversimplify the processes involved. Also, Real appears to have ignored his own argument by stating that context is unimportant for studying the meanings of messages, when in his concluding chapter he makes a case for studying texts in the context of a set of "historical and institutional arrangements." To identify the content of a program with the nonmediated behavior it is about is to confuse the picture with the thing, assume what has to be demonstrated, and deny the active, complex processes involved in symbolic communication. Real deserves credit for attempting to sketch out an overall framework for the study of mass-mediated culture. In part, the success of such an undertaking depends upon the ways sociocultural systems are imagined. While Real notes the importance of the historical and institutional setting, at most he introduces fashionable assertions about mass-mediated culture and the conditions of its creation. For
example, he states he has supported the hypothesis that mass-mediated culture "reflects the political economy," but he presents little evidence for his assertion. An example of a recent book which does provide empirical support for the "reflection hypothesis" is Gaye Tuchman's The TV Establishment: Programming for Power and Profit" (1973). She draws together a number of studies which examine the ways in which mass-mediated fare is produced so that the reader can see the ways in which programs are manufactured to fit the requirements of the larger society, particularly the requirements of political and economic interests.

While a framework which does justice to the character of various historical and institutional settings must be created, we also need ethnographies of communication which get at the ways people actually make and use mass-mediated culture. Two studies that demonstrate the worth of such a strategy are Tuchman's News, the Newsmens Reality (1969) and Gans' chapter on how Americans use mass communication in The Urban Villagers (1962). We need systematic studies of the relationships between mass-mediated culture and elite, folk, popular, and mass culture and the ways in which each is produced or used by variegated producers and publics.

Real's attempt to synthesize a number of theoretical and methodological orientations will invite criticism on a number of counts. For those who like their discipline boundaries maintained and their theory "pure," the book is bound to be irritating; Real's theorizing and case studies will seem simplistic. For those who see the aim of such a book as illuminating experience, the book will seem another example of social science restating the familiar or the interesting in a way that renders it less significant. And for those who see the aim of academic study clearly separated from a concern for social policy, the book continually violates that norm. With the exception of the last statement, I find the book disappointing on every count. What is missing is a framework that more satisfactorily accounts for the complex, problematic relationships between social and symbolic systems, particularly for systems involving both mediated and nonmediated communication.

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