Study on the changes of photography through the post photography era

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Abstract. Literature published from 1839 to 2015 is reviewed to put the contemporary photography into perspective and delve into the emerging post-photography era, its impact and orientation. A range of technological development cases were examined to suggest the orientation of future photography. According to Roland Barthes, photography is about things that have gone, that used to exist in the past and that have perished [2]. As the products of diverse efforts to revive the deadened photography, digital photography, virtual reality and 3D images are contemplated with a view to investigate the world of visual illusion which is the ultimate state of virtual reality and to explore the photographic images beyond the ubiquitous status which is the end of the desire for reproduction in the world of vivid virtual reality.

Keywords: Post photography era, Contemporary digital photography, virtual reality, ubiquitous

1 Introduction

We live in a post-photography society. Technological advancement has shifted photographic discourses. Scientific changes have extended the concept of photography to digital photography and 3D images [5, 6, and 8]. Constant research into the roles and significance of photography undergoing a transformation has been conducted. Yet, such research efforts are limited in scope. Hence, the present study draws upon literature published for approximately 150 years, encompassing the transition from analog to digital photography, to diagnose the flow of analog and digital photography, and to consider the impacts emerging from the shift to the post-photography society. Also, this study illustrates the discourse of digital photography in relation to copy, extension and transmission in line with digitization of photography, so as to examine the future of digital photography and put the post-photography era into perspective. Specifically, the present study outlines the previous discussions in light of the changing status of photographers (power shift), the changing camera technology (technological
advancement) and socio-cultural changes of photography (cultural shift) in the post-photography era to fathom the paradigm of the era.

2 Main text

2.1 Contemporary digital photography

In 2013, Dr. Shoukhrat Mitalipov at Oregon Health and Science University in the U.S. succeeded in cloning human stem cells. This implies that human body parts will be cloned from stem cells within years and that human cloning will become as easy as photographing in a few decades. Currently, digital photography enables diverse alteration with ease which is analogous to genetic modification. Photoshop representing digital photography supports the alteration of skin tones, eye colors, eyebrow shapes, hairs and body shapes [3]. In photographs one is transformed (face off) into a different being. Enhancing beauty justifies the diverse transformation. Not only in portraits but also in digital photos, pixels are manipulated with ease. The simple and easy manipulation inculcates an idea that photos are far from truths in the mind of the public [4]. Yet, photographs convey both true and untrue aspects like the two-faced Janus, which has been reinforced since the advent of digital photography.

2.2 Power shift of photographers in the post-photography era

Another aspect is the post-production. Digital photos can easily be produced and reproduced in a variety of forms [1]. Photographic retouching makes it possible to adjust tones, enhance colors and synthesize or alter forms. That is, the post-production enables the alteration of photographs with its applicability ever increasing. Thus, anyone as well as photographers has a right for post-production. With the control of photographers diminishing, the power has been transferred to the public. Also, such a diminishing power has empowered the right to edit in lieu of the intrinsic value of photographs.

2.3 Orientation for digital technology

What has triggered the transition from analog to digital photography? Every invention occurs for a reason and has a mission. The advancement of digital technology seems to impose a mission on us [7]. This study determines the path given to us and anticipates what is to come on the path. Digital photography is like a pencil to modern people. People can create something by moving their fingertips. Likewise, instead of memorizing things, they photograph things just like typing or writing something with pencil.
3 Conclusions

3.1 A breakthrough leap in the post-photography era

More often than not, we regard digital photography as the evolution of the concept of silver halide pictures. This is comparable to Fred Ritchin’s analogy of a horseless carriage. On seeing the first car, people perceived it as a horseless carriage. They partially understood the roles of cars and the changes they brought by associating them with the conventional transport. Similarly, digital photography would be viewed as a category of conventional photography as in the analogy of a horseless carriage. However, such a perspective often made it difficult for us to understand digital photography, leaving the universalization of technology and cultural gaps much to be desired. Thus, we need to take a different point of view. Differently put, digital photography should be considered not as a continuum from conventional photography but as the advent of a new tool. Cameras will progressively evolve to the extent that photographs are not virtual reality but reality itself. Also, digital photography is developing from the incomplete copying of material images with silver halide to the world of complete immaterial copying (the world of data). Pixels comprised of bits exist simultaneously in diverse spaces on the web. Walter Benjamin asserted that a priority should be given to seeing to what extent art is transformed via photography before questioning whether photography is an art form. Digital photos are pixels, which come down to signals. In this context, it is necessary to investigate the extent to which the roles of conventional photography could be extended via digital photography. The act of photographing is about recording and owning, which are two important points in photography. Analyzing the metadata of photographs reveals what humans want to record, own and prefer. Not just digital cameras but also surveillance cameras and video cameras facilitate transmitting locations and other photograph-related information as well as one’s records to information service providers’ web-hard systems (cloud service) in real time, and storing the information in the systems. Then, the information is fed into the web, linked, searched and restored. Camera technology, or vision-based technology, evolves into the technology relevant to optic nerves. 3D spectacles will make it difficult to distinguish the reality from a copied vision. Now, it is possible to clone the world using not only plane images but also 3D video images. This reality forecasts the end of the discussion about technology and science related to photography. To highlight the technological and scientific attributes of photography, something genuinely novel need be demonstrated, e.g. recording and storing human thoughts or showing what spirits are like. Photographs will develop into 3D images, which are expected to end as well because they are illusions or virtual images after all. The illusionary world will turn into an era of genetic cloning or optic nerves based on brain science. Photography will be part of the transformation from the technology of images into the age of genetics or cognition.
References