The firm foundations of the photographic world have been shaken many times before this point. Whether it be from revolutionary talent, technical progression or simply a changing viewpoint, no one can deny that digitalization has struck the infrastructure of photography in a way like never before. Rather than leaving ruins behind it, we see the blueprints of the practice we know being re-evaluated, re-assessed and re-imagined by those with a camera in one hand and their digital tools in the other.

by Marcel Feil

What is a photo? This seems a rather routine question that will have little urgency for the majority of people who make use of photography in an everyday and fairly unconscious manner. Yet however simple the question, the answer is a good deal more complex and pressing than many might at first realize. How do we arrive at a proper definition of the word 'photograph' now that the nature of photography has changed so fundamentally with the ever-advancing digitalization of the medium over recent decades? In daily conversation we speak of 'photography' for the sake of convenience, even though the techniques and methods generally used bear little if any resemblance to those of classical photography. For convenience we also still talk about 'cameras', although in fact the word is an anachronism if we mean devices for taking pictures. There is no physical film, and no use is made of a darkroom, of photochemical processes, or of paper or card as a vehicle on which the image unambiguously presents itself. No tangible object is involved, with a specific format, weight and material composition. The fact that the traditional photographic vocabulary is no longer adequate is clear from the increasing use of the term 'image' in place of 'photo'. The 'image' has broken free from a physical existence. It has been liberated from the frame to rediscover itself in a previously unknown and unforeseen digital context that is determined by the apparatus used by the viewer. An image is no longer fixed. It has acquired an ephemeral, immaterial character; it can continually change its nature and status and manifest itself in different ways; it can reproduce itself endlessly in no time at all and be in several places at once, perhaps in a broken down form. Whereas a photo is a single material object, the technical image is a multiplicity of possible and often simultaneous appearances. So, again: what is a photo?

This fundamental change in the photographic toolbox has produced a generation of artists who treat the medium in a critical and investigative way. Some concentrate on formal aspects, while for others an often implicit criticism of the social implications of the current use of images is more important. Because along with the medium the position and meaning of the photographic image has changed radically. Especially in a society in which so much culturally relevant information is communicated through images, and more than ever a complex dynamic exists among visual material, it is important that a fundamental reassessment of the medium takes place and that the foundations are laid for a new

visual literacy. What is the value and significance of photography in our own time? How are we to read photographic images? How do photographic images come about and how does that translate into new questions about form and a new aesthetic? What is the relationship between photography and reality and how do images function in a society in which digitalization has changed our ways of communicating, whether socially, politically or commercially, so thoroughly? How does the current medium relate to its own past and what is the role of the photographer?

Such questions are highly relevant to the new generation of image makers working both with and within the new visual landscape. The need to reassess photography is leading to its reinvention in a totally transformed social and technological context, a reinvention that is mindful of almost a hundred and seventy-five years of photographic history. The current position of photography therefore has a certain amount in common with the very earliest years of the medium. In all sorts of places people are experimenting with new photographic techniques, trying out methods and processes that have not fully crystallized yet and demonstrating a mindset that is pleasingly non-conformist. This open-mindedness guarantees that there will be unexpected approaches and often surprising results, whether in a formal or aesthetic sense or with respect to content. It is therefore in the nature of these developments that no ultimate aim has been clearly formulated. This necessary reinvention of the medium may in retrospect turn out to be the start of a real renaissance of photography.

The editors of *Foam* first came into contact with the work of several representatives of this new generation of image-makers through our refined network of scouts and especially through the portfolios submitted in response to our annual talent call. Among the innumerable portfolios submitted we noticed on a number of occasions work that testified to a new approach to the medium, a new aesthetic and a mentality that seemed to slip back and forth between brainy and witty. We were fascinated, but at the same time we did not feel we could really put a finger on it. That in itself increased its appeal – reason enough to publish the work in the issue we devote annually to new, upcoming talent. Work by Jessica Eaton appeared in *Foam Magazine Talent Issue* #28 in 2011, as did that of Lucas Blalock. Closely related work by artist Sam Falls appeared in the autumn of 2012, #32, and that of Daniel

Gordon and Joshua Citarella in the *Talent Issue* #36 of 2013. Daniel Gordon was chosen in March 2014 by an international jury as the winner of the Foam Paul Huf Award. A little additional research has made clear that the artists whose work we initially saw from a particular perspective are representatives of a far greater whole. There were other artists who worked with related themes and issues, who had comparable working methods, a similar mentality or the same training, in some cases even knew each other well and had worked together. Yet from the start it was clear that it would not be correct to speak of a group or a new school of photography in the traditional sense. That is far too static, homogeneous, not to say old-fashioned a way to describe this generation of artists, a generation characterized by dynamism, movement, changing coalitions and a focus on process, a generation produced by a reality in which flux, non-linearity and ambiguity are essential. Charlotte Cotton was right to speak of the artists in question as 'a critical mass'.

Although the work of these artists is visually highly diverse and apparently difficult to characterize, there are some clear similarities between them. At the risk of generalizing a little, the following common features are significant: The final image is in almost all cases constructed, whether analogue or digital, and whether produced by montage, collage or assemblage. In order to do so, much use is made of existing visual material, whether or not it is digital in nature or origin. Therefore, deconstruction and recontextualization are essential. There are often references to other techniques and media (painting and sculpture; computer animation) or use may be made of a multimedia approach, and analogue and digital techniques are played with, sometimes in a hybrid form. However, the visual result is translated into an image that is primarily photographic, even if the layering and tension of the surface is increased by the integration of tactile objects. As a result great importance is attached to the intrinsic quality of the surface. This artistic process leads to an often intriguing tension between the ephemeral, digital character of much visual material that was used and the physical, object-like character of the final work. Having said this, in general there is a particular stress on the importance of the process involved; the way images come into being and the particular methods deployed are sometimes more important than the physical result. Despite the regular references to history and art history, photographic conventions are set aside and there is much room for experimentation.

And lastly, despite the emphasis an formalistic topics, thinking in processes, including production processes, and the ways the value of image and perception are determined are often linked to social criticism, especially criticism of the financial, economic, capitalist system.

Current technological conditions have given rise to a vast digital archive of images of a magnitude that is beyond human imagining. Every day many tens of millions of images are uploaded. Despite these immense quantities, the majority of this material is in theory relatively accessible from computers, smart phones and other gadgets. The decentralized model of the internet also means that information streams appear less hierarchical and there is a notion of equivalence. This has made the appropriation of the image, in a broad sense, and its manipulation, adaptation and further distribution into a tried and tested, and widely accepted, artistic method. Many artists use images from the internet as raw material for the creation of new images.

Daniel Gordon finds his visual building blocks on the internet by entering particular terms in Google Image Search. The first transformation of the visual material is the result of a simple print command. A hierarchy of immaterial, abstract information built up module by module by means of pixels becomes a physical, paper object with an image that is constructed in a different way from the original. From countless cut out two-dimensional pieces, Gordon constructs a three-dimensional tableau that is largely based on classical genres such as the still life or the portrait. With an analogue view camera and making use of thoroughly conventional studio techniques, he transforms the spatial constellation into a new two-dimensional reality, that of a negative. By then scanning the negative, the image is brought back into a digital context, where a digital toolkit is available for post-production work. Eventually the image is returned to physical reality by the creation of a high-quality print. Repeated changes to the nature of the material, along with changes to the context in which certain facets of the image are shown, determine the eventual result.

Because of his special appreciation of the quality of photography in printed media, Matt Lipps leaves the digital archive of images on the internet completely out of account. Using existing visual material from magazines of the 1950s and 1960s he investigates

what happens to images with a recognized artistic or cultural value when they are deployed in a new system and arranged according to new categories. By means of subtle cut and paste work he creates physical tableaux and theatrical settings that he further manipulates using light and adjustments to scale. What makes his work so fascinating, especially the series *Horizon(s)*, is that the images come from a magazine that was intended to inform its readers about art and culture. The magazine dictated, as it were, how cultural history ought to be understood, namely in a way that was strictly ordered, unambiguous and chronological. By rethinking that hierarchy, Lipps undermines the established cultural-historical canon and the time-honoured linear way of writing about history. His tableaux remind us of surfing the internet: non-linear, associative, with an order and hierarchy that are constantly changing.

To others, analogue photography is substantially less important in the creative process. Since the arrival of consumer software in the late 1980s, the opportunities to manipulate images digitally have increased markedly and in the commercial arena no image is any longer published that has not been thoroughly digitally manipulated. The intention is of course that the manipulation should be invisible; the final image must communicate directly and unambiguously without giving anything away about how it came into being. Lucas Blalock deliberately turns this process around and makes digital intervention an essential part of his work. The use of image-manipulation tools such as the 'clone stamp' or the 'layer mask' is not hidden but emphasized by embracing the visual implications as part of a new aesthetic. What would normally be regarded as disturbing digital errors are deliberately deployed by Blalock to achieve a different kind of photographic image, fascinating, surprising and sometimes disturbing precisely because of this appeal to unusual aesthetic frameworks. The flatness of his images is an element both striking and intriguing. His pictures appear to have a cool, impersonal directness that seems to arise from the visual language of cheap advertisements and leaflets. The presence of the artist, his signature, appears to manifest itself mainly in the introduction of unsettling perturbations.

Are we dealing here with implied criticism of the nature of most of the photographic images with which we are surrounded, namely images with a commercial goal, and of the ubiquitous influence of commerce on our lives? It is undoubtedly true that many of our

desires and wishes, and through them ultimately also our behaviour, are determined to a great degree by images. In the form of a tempting image, an invitation is held out to us that we want to believe in and go after, even without knowing exactly how the image relates to the physical object or reality it represents. In this sense a photographic universe creates the terms on which objects are represented, shapes the desires of the viewer/consumer and ultimately determines the way that the concrete, material object is understood and appreciated. This interrelational system of references, representations and symbols led Kate Steciw to experiment with the re-contextualizing of objects and images in an attempt to disturb the process through which the dominant commercial ideology offers us visual material. In doing so Steciw constantly switches back and forth between the photographic space within the framework of the flat surface and the sculptural space of the attached objects, which are built up out of photographic material. Perspectives are interrupted, photographic material is distorted into baroque shapes and integrated into sometimes extremely complicated compositions, within which the sense of space and the distinction between represented object and material object is challenged to the utmost.

This playing with and simultaneous presentation of different perspectives is sometimes reminiscent of Cubism and its use of collages. Steciw talked about this in a conversation with Lucas Blalock on Shane Lavalette's online platform, *Lay Flat,* saying: 'I think this is an apt connection to make to a lot of the conceptual and formal investigations occurring in and around contemporary photography, not only because we find ourselves at a similarly aesthetic junction but also because new technologies again have created new spatial and perceptual potentials that must be considered from the vantage point of the current artistic paradigm. I think what is most compelling about both Cubism and recent photographic trajectories is that they represent a kind of conceptual bridge between movements.'

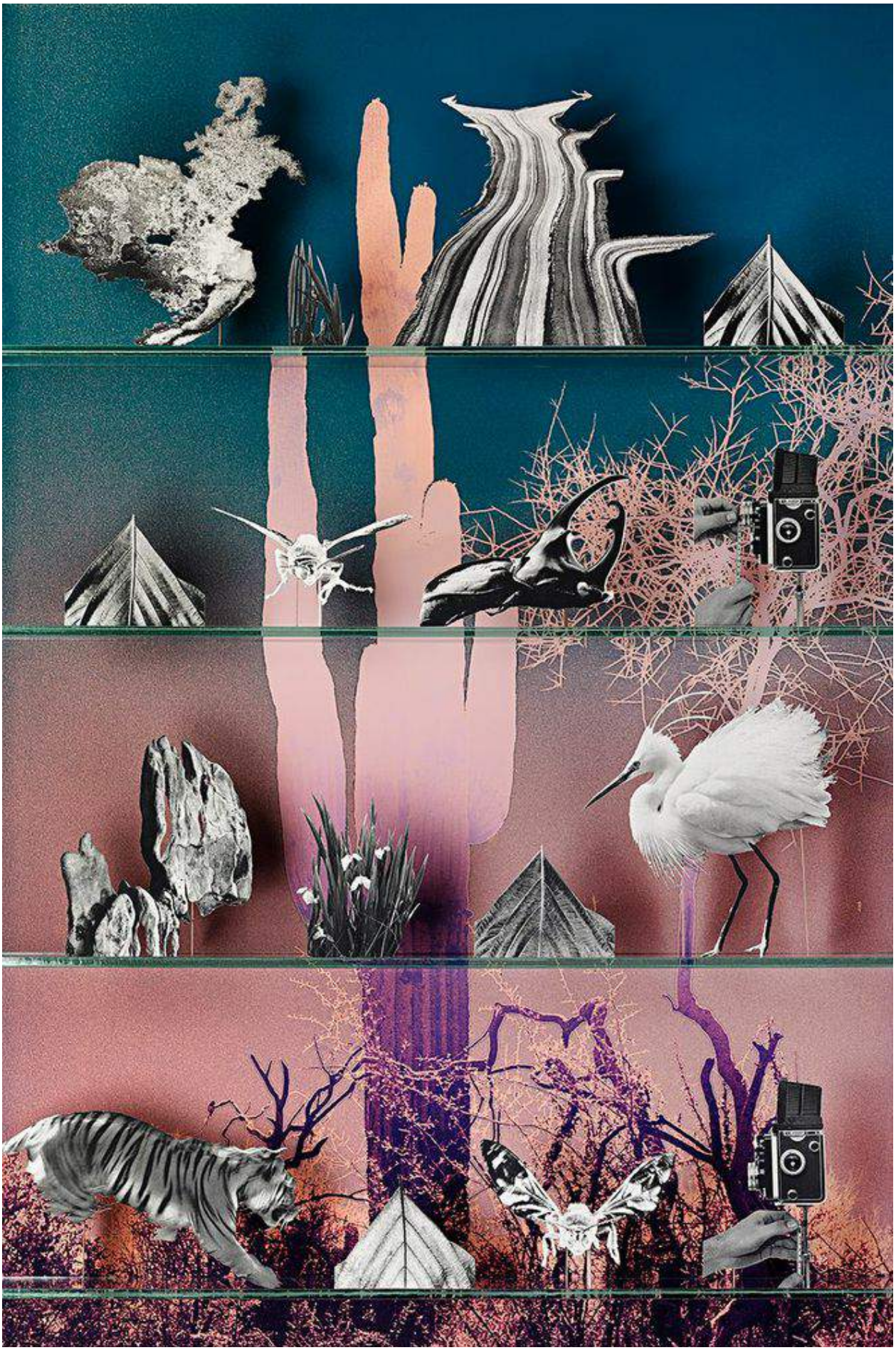
The reference to Cubism, especially as a transitional form, is interesting and not to be seen in isolation. In his text Joshua Chuang refers to two earlier moments in the history of the medium that demonstrate similarities with current developments, namely the avant-garde movement in Europe and the Soviet Union between the wars and the photographic developments that

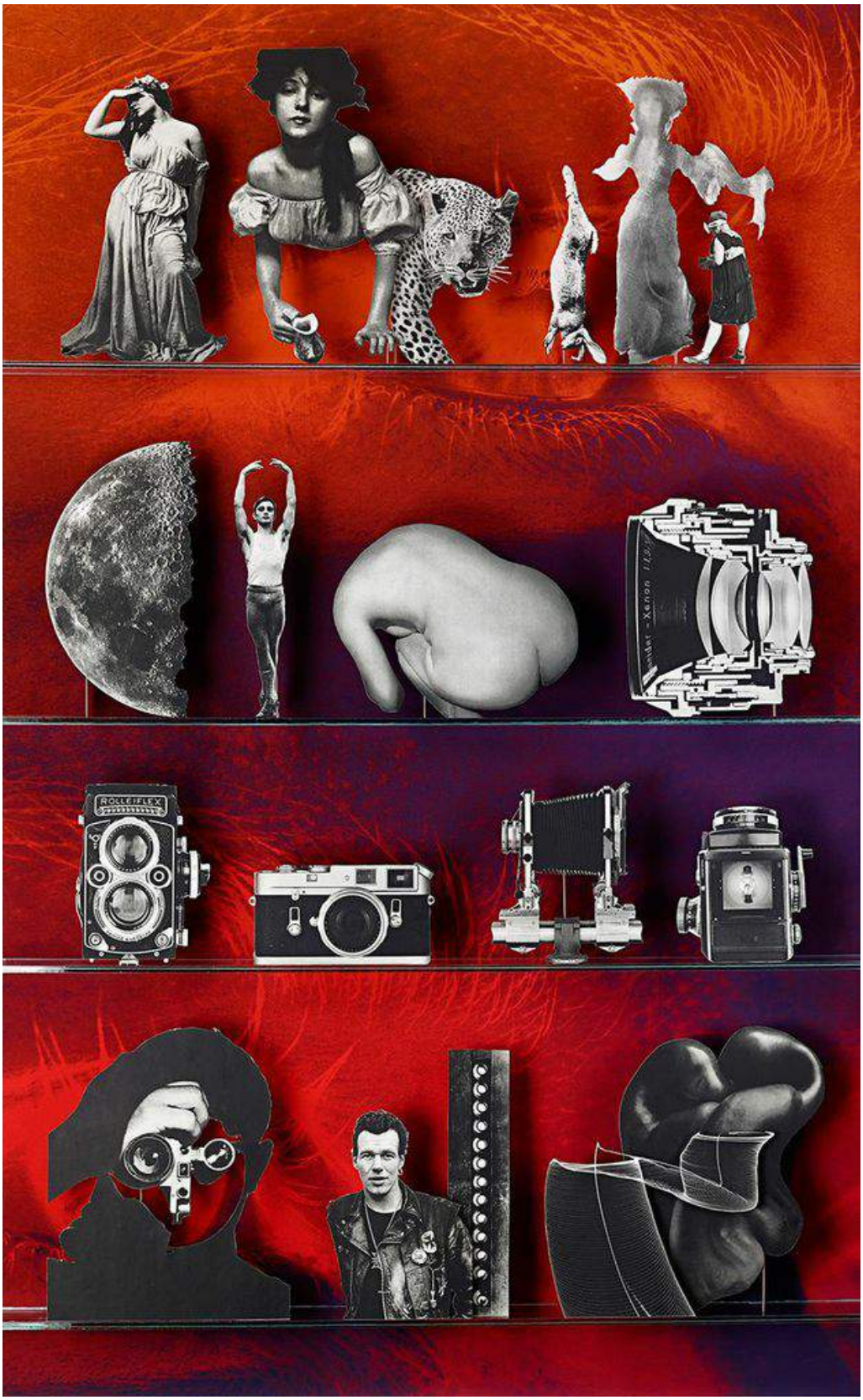
took place in America in the 1960s and 1970s. It is no accident that both were periods in which great social change came about. Now too, with drastic and rapid technological innovation, we find ourselves in a time of historical transition in which old certainties are being undermined and we have no clear idea of what shape the future will take. We are justified in speaking of a new generation of artists that in some sense could be described as post-Cold War, post-9/11, post-Lehmann Brothers and post-NSA. The falling away of an apparently clear and unambiguous worldview, the decline of leading ideologies, the unmasking of a powerful banking system, the revealing of the dark sides of capitalism and the many crises all this has brought with it form the social context within which much of the work included in *Under Construction* needs to be understood. It is no longer linear but non-linear, it is ambiguous rather than unambiguous, simultaneous instead of chronological, quantum instead of Newtonian, context rather than standpoint, partial in contrast to total, complexity versus simplicity, more process than product, dynamic versus static, access in preference to ownership. In view of the uncertain, heterogeneous character of our time, it is also not without reason that in quite a bit of the work of this generation we find references to history or to historical precursors (Picasso or Matisse in Daniel Gordon, Josef Albers and Sol Lewitt in Jessica Eaton and the quest for a perfect naturalistic rendering of the human body by the ancient Greeks in Sara VanDerBeek) – as if within this hybrid, heterogeneous environment an assiduous search is underway for a foothold, for a fixed foundation in the past from which the quest for a new equilibrium can be pursued. Where this search will lead no one knows, and bearing in mind the mentality of many of the artists mentioned here that is perhaps far less important than the journey itself. What is clear is that photography, and the use, value and significance of photography, have reached an important transitional stage, and that an active search is going on for ways to enter into a new, meaningful relationship with the world around us.

But is this search exclusively done by American artists? It goes without saying that the fundamental social, political, economic and artistic changes cause by technological developments are of an outspoken global nature and not limited to a certain territory or culture. We are all touched and influenced by the consequences of living in a digital era. So we can identify a similar quest for a new use of the photographical medium with other artists both in

Europe and to some extend in Asia. However, the fact that there is an obvious and outspoken awareness of the challenges forced upon us by the new digital reality among a striking number of American artists is not without importance. The US have an long-standing and strong photographic tradition and were hugely influential in the early emancipation of the medium as a proper means of artistic expression. Within this tradition there has always been a strong emphasis on formalism and the potential of photography to relate to shared visible reality in an mostly clear documentary way. Given the nature and the strength of this tradition the current artists are blatantly open-minded and show the guts to experiment in a sometimes unorthodox way. The fact that this is currently happening within American photography might also be evidence of the huge and sometimes even disturbing impact of visual footage on American society, especially within an outspoken commercial framework. Visual representations of an ideal, desirable but often mendacious reality are omnipresent and infect the hearts and souls of many. Images create desire, and desire is a powerful undercurrent in much of our social behaviour. So a critical approach of images is perhaps more understandable, perhaps even more justified within the American social context.

Lastly, a few words on the nature of this publication. We deliberately choose to not divide the work of the artists in clear and well-defined portfolios. This image driven publication can be considered almost as a continuum of new visual material, as a stream of images that forces the viewer to find new ways to relate to the work presented. Just as the images themselves often have an intrinsic quality to puzzle the spectator and to put our perception to the test. We tried to conceive the publication almost as a relay in which the work of every single artist partially overlaps the work of the former and the latter artist. By doing so we tried to connect different bodies of work in a very open, playful manner to increase coherency. All articles and texts are really considered to be interventions that pass-through the stream of images and are intended to provide the reader with the necessary background information. Because context and the possibility to relate to the bigger picture is of the utmost importance to properly understand the importance of perhaps the most fundamental transitional period in the history of photography.

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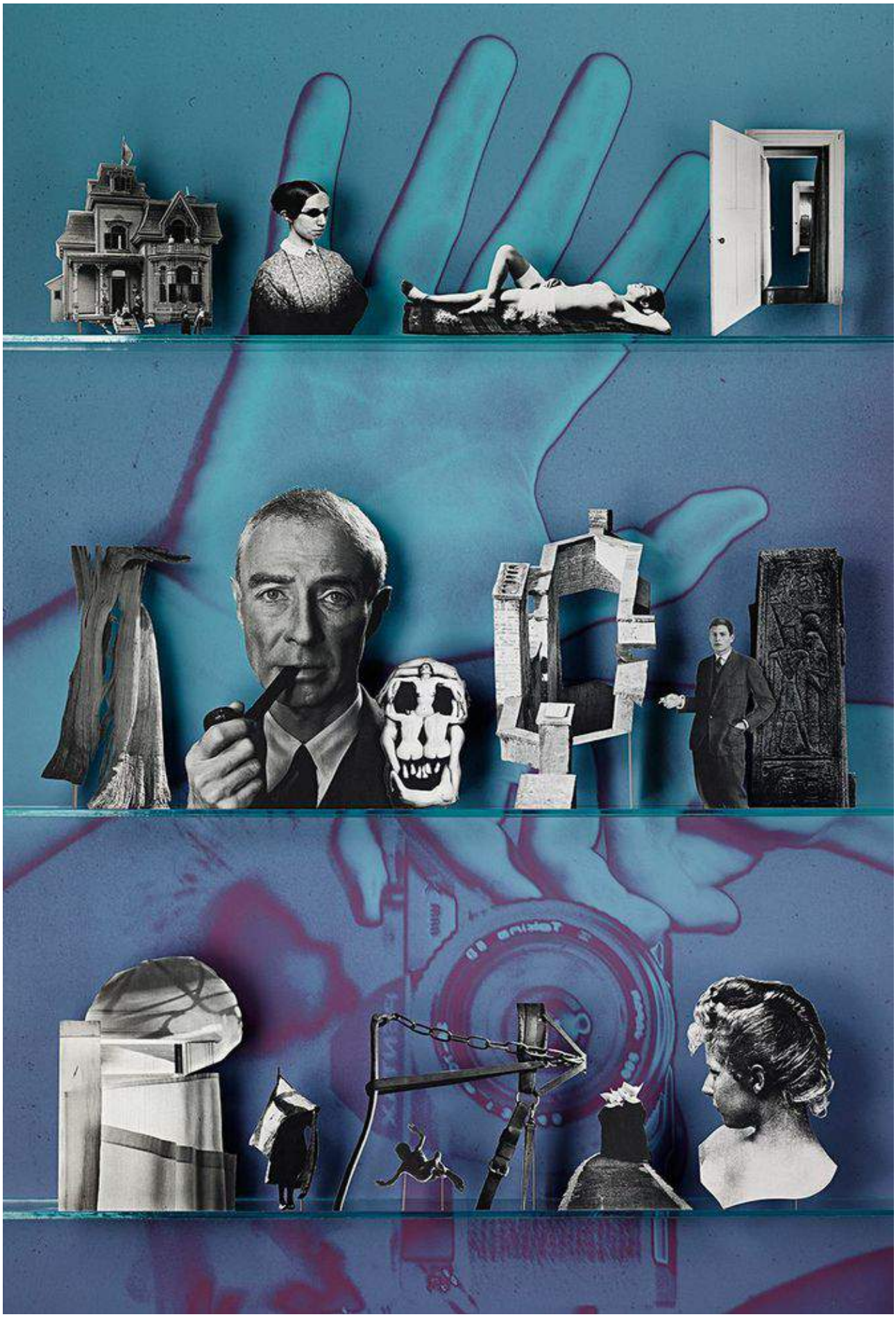

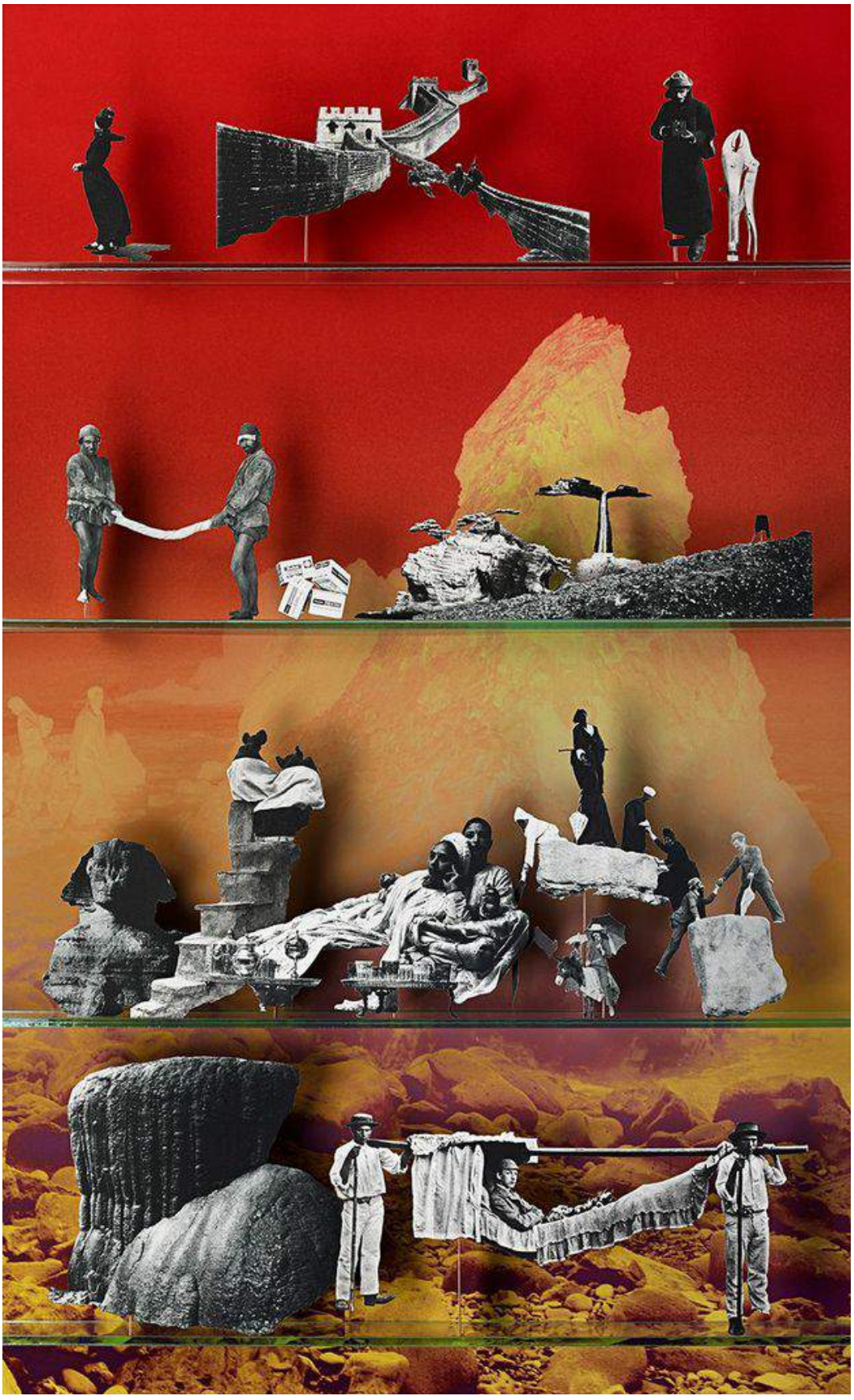

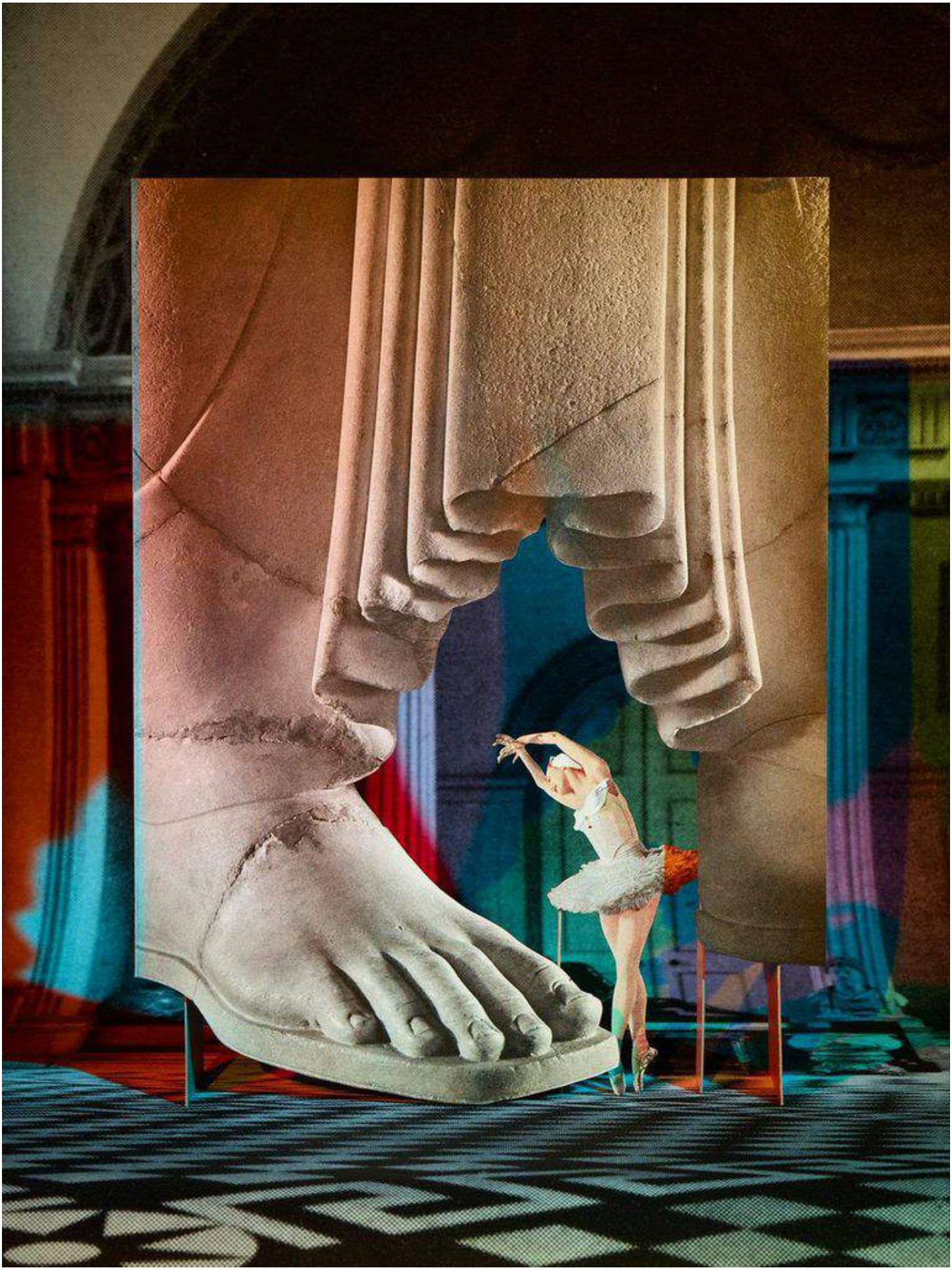

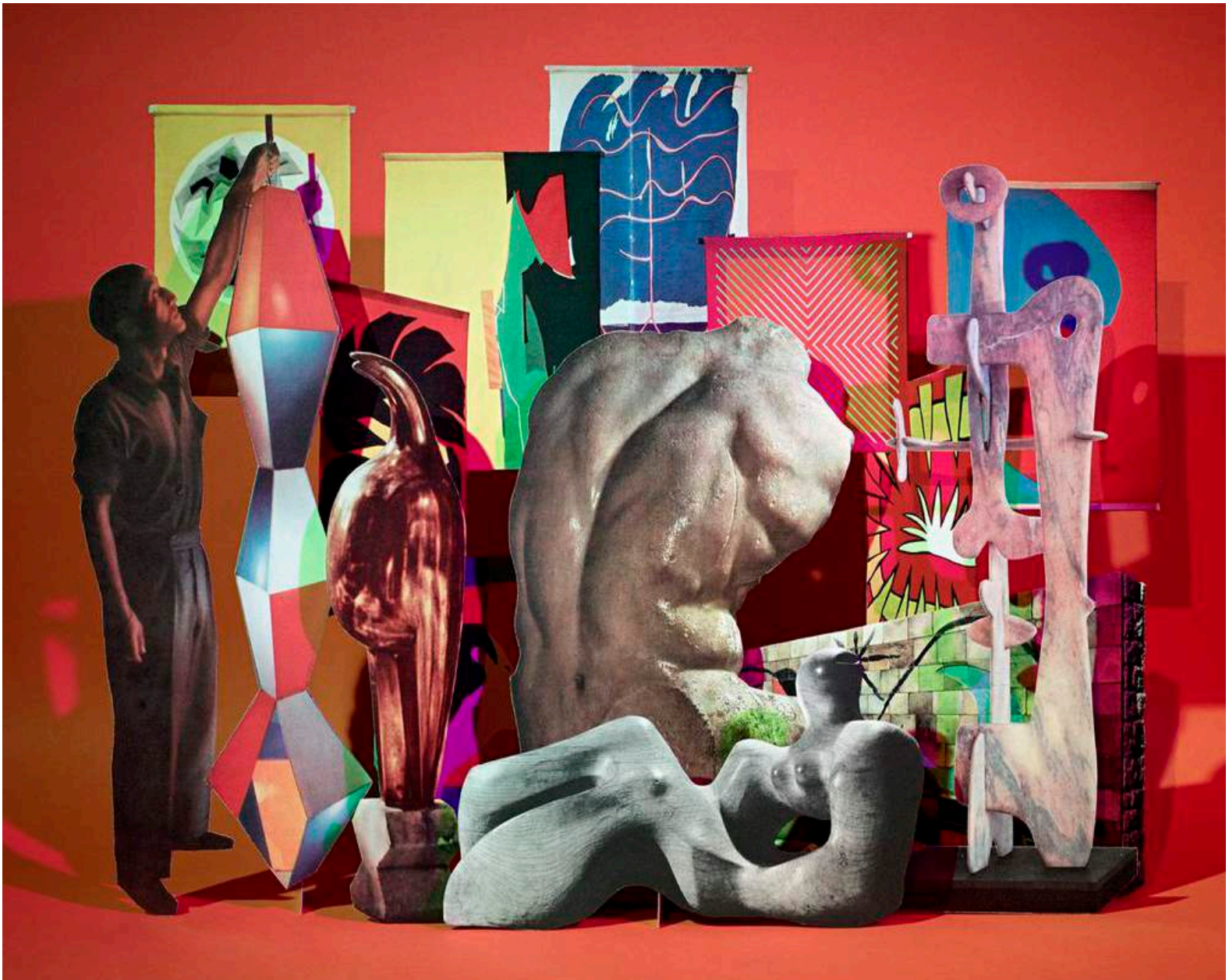

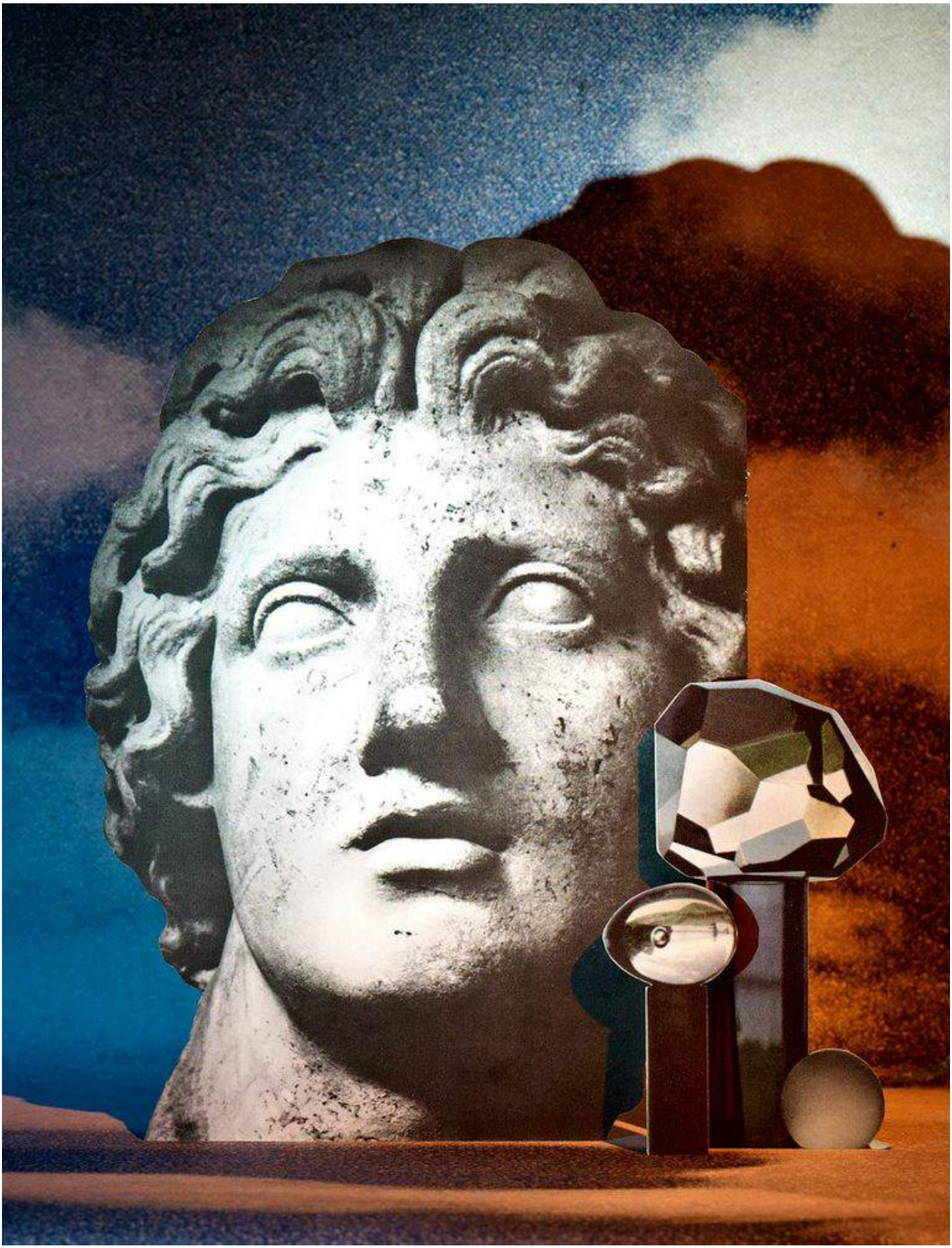

As vinyl has been to MP3, we watch the shift from physical aspects of photography to near complete product disposability. Instead of flailing and falling through the cracks, this can lead the way to expansion, broadening and remix; paving the way to boundless artistic relevance within a form.

by Charlotte Cotton

A Photographic Moment

I admit to not being an impartial viewer of *Foam*'s reconceived magazine's first issue. In fact I am thrilled that it commences by acknowledging nine exceptional artists who are providing new permissions for the practice and theory of contemporary art photography. Over the past two years much of my curating and writing has been about the practices that these artists encapsulate and I share *Foam*'s belief in their articulation of photographic ideas as important and timely for us to think through. These North American artists' approaches to image-making represent a leading regional locus of a global phenomenon. We are seeing multiple, international and highly individualised versions of proposals for photographic practice that move away from the now well-travelled path of contemporary art photography as a hermetic discipline. The questions that these artists seem to be asking are more broad and ambitious than what the next incremental step will be for this prized photographic genre.

The ideas, values, processes and use of materials represented here are active contemplations of the role of the artist and the meaning of the photographic within the evolution of our visual and cultural climate. A prevailing theme of the discussions I've had in studio visits and teaching situations in recent years centres upon where authored photographic practices sit within an image environment that necessarily privileges the algorithmic, empirical mass of photography. In effect, people are asking: how do artists create works where their intent can be clearly read and they can continue to utilise the idea of photography's broad terrain in meaningful ways? Like all creative fields in the 21st century, cultural photography underwent a process of polarization of sorts. We see this played out in the operations of the art markets, education, cultural institutions, the professions and industries of photography. It leaves all except the newly emerging and most established art photographers without a stabilising sense (or fantasy) of a meta-structure or institutional aim to support and acknowledge their contribution to the discourse's vitality. The potential and also danger for contemporary art photographers has been feeling at the mercy of market determinism, as the suppliers of the photographic equivalent to vinyl – an aesthetic revivalist gesture and un-reconstructed material form – at the other end of the spec-

Photography as a constantly growing information stream.

Orphan imagery that exists to be re-versioned and remixed.

trum from the MP3-esque world of contemporary image culture. This separation may suit a market that requires products of clear lineage and stable meaning but denies the actuality of the practices and theories that underscore the true potential of photography as contemporary art. As the artists represented here attest, photography operates within art as a locative material, capable of being within, outside, and between artistic definitions. This hinges on its capacity to be more than one essentialist notion, instead realised through the iterative, layered, rapid and additive behaviour of the broad concept of the image environment with as much acuity as its deployment of photography's historical, material, and contemplative capacities for artistic authorship.

Navigation of the media image environment has been a factor in the story of independent photographic practice and modern art since the late 19th century and the first groundswell of potential in photography's mass-making and distribution. There is a passing resemblance to the attitudes of earlier image-makers in the strategies available to contemporary art photographers: the Secessionist use of craft

to distinguish artistic authorship from the medium's quotidian and amateur mass; critical use of popular press and news imagery in avant garde collage and montage; and Postmodernist appropriation of advertising photographs into schema that laid bare the connotations and denotations of mass-media imagery. While it is worth remembering that our contemporary image explosion is a hyperbolic version of what artists have drawn on for over one hundred years, we have to acknowledge the differences, including the ways that it provides new and multiple positions for an artist to take.

An important contemporary collective idea of photography is as a constantly growing information stream, in circulation as an algorithmically flattened plane of scrolling orphan imagery that exists to be re-versioned and remixed. The history of art photography may unintentionally add some old-fashioned authorship into the contingent meaning within the image banks of Tumblr, Pinterest, et al. but doesn't necessarily maintain any distinctions between the photographic few and the many, or the source and its versions. Our arrival at the long-awaited destination where software becomes a medium of the genre of contemporary art photography requires us to acknowledge other forms of authorship in photography's modalities of editing, archiving and curating. Appropriation and archive retrieval now seem like quaint ideas of reassuring boundaries between the artist and image consumer rather than the counter-arguments to prevailing image cultures by a sentient contemporary artist. With such pluralistic and highly unfixed photographic ideas, the challenge for artists can seem as basic as how to make a gesture that can be distinguished in ways more substantial than production values and context from image consumer behaviour on the internet and within social media.

The points of artistic authorship in the practices of photography have never been more explicit or dispersed, starting with the choice to make your own image capture or to use an image source. We can and should read meaning into artists' processes and their decisions about what old or new photographic hardware they deploy and how they insert manual and material labour. Uses of software to render

the image, circulate it, compress and convert it, and give it form require us to perceive software as a medium with its own terms and conditions – and authors – regardless of the start of its relationship with contemporary art photography in the 1990s as the new default tool to mimic and enhance analogue photographic processes. The dominant software that reaches to the core of contemporary art photography is Photoshop, the go-to pixel-based software of our era with its automated filters that can simulate the physical tools of photography and painting. Its additive layers of manual work call forth compounding existential issues for photographic practices that presume to be founded on the idea of the original picture, in this new creative playing field of iteration, versioning and in-built obsolescence.

My take on what unifies *Foam*'s selection of artists is their direct addressing of the cultural environment in which they are operating. They are creatively engaged with what it can mean to make art within a networked image culture. These are not artists who act as illustrators of the operations of the image world, and their work rarely makes contemporary image media its explicit subject or, indeed, its narrative. Instead, they draw the media ecology – its ideograms, theories and processes – into the site of contemporary art. For me at least, these gestures create a crucial unfixing of the idea of contemporary practice as servicing (with digital processes and refreshed narratives) the tail end of the idea of photography as a separatist cultural discipline that still needs to legitimise itself as art. Consequently, photography as an arena somewhere on the outside of and looking in on to contemporary image culture at large becomes the photographic material with which to navigate art.

In viewing the selection and layout of the works represented here, I'm struck by the extent of the individual photographers' creative journeys in a matter of just a few years. Collectively, they speak to the pace at which photographic ideas are being versioned and convey the fertility of the ground that they have created out of dispersed notions of photography. Photographic capture remains central to all of the artists represented here, including in its singular removal from the multiple processes of rendering within Kate

Steciw's most recent works. Authored capture operates as a primary source material in Lucas Blalock's practice and in Joshua Citarella's earliest works shown here. Capture translates into the fixing of the quasi-alchemical possibilities of in-camera photographic techniques for both Jessica Eaton and Matthew Porter. Their meticulous and controlled labouring with analogue tools consciously offers a technical counter-argument and material equivalence to the automated processes of image software. For Daniel Gordon and Matt Lipps, photographic capture is the act of animating their intensive processes. This is also apparent in Sara VanDerBeek's photographs from the late 2000s where photographic prints and photo-mechanical reproductions are the central component of the temporary sculptural constellations of material relationships that she stages for photographic capture. The idea of photography as a material stock or cache, with which the artist can render, is most pronounced in the work of Matt Lipps and Daniel Gordon. The authored act of photographic capture animates and transforms Gordon's laborious constructions (constituted from torn scraps of luscious on-line advertising imagery) of intentionally clumsy bad-art approximations of painterly still lifes and portrait scenes. Matt Lipps' recent works continue his poised crafting of fantastical and idiosyncratic scenarios created with image reproductions from a series of *Time-Life* photography volumes published in the early 1970s. Lipps recalibrates the image hierarchy of these analogue-age genres of photography into precious souvenirs, orphaned from their makers and contemporaneous reading, yet newly vital.

I am drawn by the way that Kate Steciw and Lucas Blalock use very definite signs of human mark-making and painterly gestures in their practice. Kate Steciw's use of Photoshop to blend and distort her archive of stock photography is the image canvas onto which she applies signs of manufactured and artisanal production. Her manufactured materials include mass-produced stickers and catalogue-ordered domestic ornaments that version photographic sources and the gestures of the human hand. Steciw also collaborates with craftsman

How could this possibly be photography?

frame makers (whose trade stickers are often visible in her final works) that declare the photographic frame to be another site of authorship and meaning. Increasingly, Lucas Blalock's use of Photoshop moves beyond his disruption of the image through the software that is conventionally supposed to seamlessly perfect it. Blalock proposes a naturalised idea of Photoshop to be a similarly additive process as painting. His *oeuvre* rapidly evolves and reads less as an ironic calling the bluff of software's automation of human gesture and becomes more of a proposition for software as an additional tool for authentic artistic expression. Blalock's current practice highlights the shift in contemporary art practice from the appropriation to the channelling of the motivations and enquiries of earlier artistic practices. Blalock's recent work consciously meditates on the spirit of painter Philip Guston and the determined and truthful childishness of his paintings from the late 1960s with their celebration and mockery of image culture. There are other explicit citations apparent here that similarly function as the channelling of artists' investigations to create newly resonant and authentic forms of practice. Jessica Eaton directly cites both the formalism and creative motivations of Josef Albers and Sol Lewitt in her work shown here. Sara VanDerBeek's recent work, which provides a significant proposal for how the photographic and the sculptural both merge and can be separated, seem channelled through a creative conversation with the Postmodernist practices of Sarah Charlesworth.

The remixability of the surfaces and motifs of visual culture is also at play within the work of these selected artists. Matthew Porter layers mid-century references points including an Arne Jacobsen chair, Sol Lewitt's wall drawings, commercial graphics and interior design motifs into the materials of analogue photography. A parallel construction of a visual fantasy of references into cogent contemporary art is found in Joshua Citarella's most recent work. He remixes a millennial lexicon of industrial design, contemporary art, and the optical space of commercial photography with the spirit of a Simulationist creating a flattened hierarchy of visual signs wrapped around empty forms. There is something of this characterisation in the visual experience and effect of Owen Kydd's new still-life video works, meditating on constructed still lifes and artful assemblages. Kydd's durational photographs declare just how ostensible rather than conventionally symbolic or literal a subject can be in the way that Kydd's looping videos frame the photographic moment and act of identification in a quite unexpected and timely way.

In 2012 I had my first opportunity to curatorially think through the ideas that I've expressed in this text in the exhibition *Photography is Magic!* at the Daegu Photo Biennale in South Korea. On my final day in the city, I watched visitors to the exhibition experience the work. I walked into Sara VanDerBeek's installation of elegant black-and-white photographs and painted cinder block sculptures as a man entreated the gallery attendant (who translated for me afterwards) to explain how this could possibly be photography. I went into one of the upper galleries and watched three teenagers standing in front of an Owen Kydd video where a beam from a car headlight reflects along the upper edge of a knife in a store window. They waved their hands delightedly in front of the screen, believing for a few minutes that their presence controlled this infinitely looping photographic moment.

MATT LIPPS

Matt Lipps' work is a a mystery. In his own words, his practice is 'in, with and alongside photography.' He is a prime example of a contemporary appropriation artist, similar to Thomas Mailaender, Penelope Umbrico, Corinne Vionnet, Viktoria Binschtok, Willem Popelier, and Mishka Henner. But unlike them, Lipps bypasses the internet and uses only printed sources. Moreover he falls back on analogue methods and archaic forms of presentation in his practice. He reuses iconic photographic imagery, thereby adding a further layer of meaning to those pictures. Lipps combines three interesting principles in his practice. He appropriates images from various analogue sources. For his series *'70s* for example he meticulously cut out images of naked gay men published in porn magazines of that particular era. He then carefully placed them in an intimate setting by draping bed linen around them and theatrically lighting them before capturing them with a camera. In his series *HORIZON/S* he uses imagery from the publication *Horizon*. This was a highbrow magazine that ran from the late 1950s to the late 1980s with the aim of educating its readers about the icons of cultural and art history. By crowding the cut outs into a small space against a single colour background, Lipps creates a lively diorama. For both projects he comfortably positions himself in the director's chair, directing the protagonists in their roles, steering them towards their positions. But he is also the set designer responsible for all the props on stage.

Second, Lipps employs the flexibility of collages and cabinets of curiosity as organising principles. In his series *Home* he combines photographs of the interior of his parents' house with details cut from Ansel Adams' seminal pictures of imposing American landscapes like the Yosemite Valley. In *Library* he makes use of cabinets of curiosity, a concept dating from the Renaissance. Armchair intellectuals collected items that aroused their interest and put them in a cabinet to sate their own curiosity, but also to show off their intellectuality and broad range of scientific interests. For this particular project Lipps plundered *Time-Life* publications that ran from 1970-1972 and specifically dealt with photography. A recurring characteristic in Lipps' work is the tension between the two-dimensional flat surface of the final image and the cut outs, and the three-dimensional space in which the cut outs are positioned. In *Library* however this tension is played out to the max. He uses saccharine backdrops that obviously bring out the details and the materiality of the cut outs. The shelves are hardly visible. Finally, by choosing particular images, and by rearranging them in his own way, Lipps questions their original categorization and rips them away from the original context. The artist is particularly keen to rescue marginalized groups from their previous suppression in our collective visual memory. In this sense, his work is similar to the oeuvre of Amirali Ghasemi and Eva Stenram. He is researching the centrality of photographic imagery in our collective consciousness. In *Horses* for example Lipps projects shadows of horses onto mono-colour backgrounds, implicitly referring to the importance of horses for American pioneers venturing into the Wild West.

Biography by Karin Bareman

Matt Lipps (b. 1975, USA), received his BFA from California State University, Long Beach and his MFA in studio art from the University of California, Irvine. Lipps currently lives in Los Angeles where he is the photography lab supervisor for the Department of Art at the University of California, Los Angeles. His photographs and sculptural works have been included in recent solo and group exhibitions as *The Populist Camera* at Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco (2014), *HORIZON/S* at the California Museum of Photography in Riverside (2012), *Photography is Magic!* at the Daegu Photo Biennale in Daegu, South Korea (2012), *Figure and Form in Contemporary Photography*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2012), *Out of Focus: Photography*, Saatchi Gallery, London (2012), *Living History II: Asad Faulwell & Matt Lipps* at the Marc Selwyn Fine Art in Los Angeles (2009). His work is part of various collections such as the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, the Saatchi Collection in London and the Pilara Foundation Collection/Pier 24, San Francisco.