

CONTEXTUAL STUDIES II

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Part 1: Examine the changes that have taken place in photography throughout the 1980s and 1990s with reference to a photographic genre of your choice

Introduction

The decision to go with narrative photography came from how it evolved in the 1980s and 1990s, which was an era of technological revolution and radical social and political transformation. The change from the use of analog technology by photographers was brought about by the advent of digital technology through products such as the Sony Mavica camera in 1981. This change not only brought about a shift in the techniques used in photography but also in the way information could be manipulated and disseminated (Wang et al., 2019). However, socio-political factors played a critical role in shaping the development of narrative photography and this was due to important events such as the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the apartheid regime in South Africa. This exposition will explore these changes in the context of narrative photography and how technology and socio-political factors influenced the themes, narratives and the overall significance of photographic art in the 1980s and 1990s. Some photographers such as Sebastio Salgado and Mary Ellen Mark employed their photography in the documentation of human rights, social justice, and global injustices.

Historical Context

The concept of narrative photography before 1980s was mostly determined by master photographers such as Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans who photographed the obvious truths of the Great Depression in 1930s. In their photos, human suffering and endurance were depicted in a unique and plausible manner, and they provided a powerful narrative of the period's financial hardship. The class progressed in the mid twentieth century with photojournalists such as Robert Capa and Henri Cartier-Bresson. Cartier-Bresson was a candid photographer who documented the spirit of postwar life and the decisive moment, while Capa's photographs of the Spanish Civil War and World War II were powerful and raw. By the beginning of the 1980s, new story photography

was experiencing a gigantic change due to new advancements. The use of digital imaging technology was the first harbinger of a shift away from the traditional analog approach. The first commercially viable digital cameras that were available allowed photographers to shoot, view, and edit work quite easily and rapidly, such as the Kodak DCS in 1991. This change made photography more accessible and allowed for more experimentation and more immediate telling of the narrative (Bate, 2020). Furthermore, the socio-political conditions of the 1980s and 1990s greatly influenced the formation of narrative photography. Many photojournalists documented the event of the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, which symbolized the Cold War era and the dawn of the new age. Along the same line, the demise of apartheid in South Africa and the break up of Soviet Union offered the narrative photographers the context within which they could explore the issues of freedom, individuality and transformation.

Technological Advancements

The joining of computerized innovation during the 1980s and 1990s significantly affected account photography, generally modifying how pictures were caught, made due, and shared. The introduction of digital cameras, like the Kodak DCS 100 in 1991, which enabled photographers to view and modify their shots almost immediately, marked the beginning of the transition. Real-time photojournalism was made possible and the narrative photography genre was transformed as a result of this significant reduction in the time it took to capture and distribute an image. Azoula (2021). Due to the limited availability and high cost of film, analog photography, which relied on it, required precision and careful planning. Digital photography, on the other hand, allowed photographers to experiment freely without these limitations. Andreas Gursky's large-scale digital prints, like "99 Cent" (1999), pushed the boundaries of narrative photography, demonstrating this shift. By enhancing and modifying his images with digital software, Gursky developed a brand-new visual language that could not have been achieved using traditional methods. The development of technology was a major factor in this transformation. High resolution and adaptability made DSLR cameras, like the Nikon D1, popular among professional photographers when they were introduced in 1999. These cameras made it easier to use digital techniques in narrative photography and gave photographers more freedom in how they took pictures. The development of software had a significant impact on narrative photography as well. Programs like

Adobe Photo shop empowered photographic artists to control pictures with extraordinary accuracy, improving their capacity to recount to complex stories through their work.

Cultural and Social Changes

It is important to note that changes in political and social contexts of the 1980s and 1990s influenced narrative photography. The demolition of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 captured on camera signaled the end of the Cold War and people's desire for freedom across the world. The anarchic and the progressive spirit of this epoch was embodied by Henri Cartier-Bresson in his shots of the USSR's disintegration. In the same way, there were photographers such as Kevin Carter and David Goldblatt who captured the end of apartheid in South Africa. Through Carter's image of Nelson Mandela's release and the Soweto uprising, the world was informed of apartheid and the fight for the equality of the black race (Scott, 2020). The job of media and globalization amplified these changes, rendering worldwide occasions easily accessible to a broader audience through satellite television and the internet. The fights in Tiananmen Square in 1989 with the well-known 'Tank Man' photo by Jeff Widener turned into an image of obstruction against persecution and was immediately disseminated across the globe changing the public's vision and appraisal. Journalists started moving around to capture the impact of globalization, environmental pollution, social issues, and commercialization. Sebastio Salgado's series of "Workers" (1993) and "Migrations" (2000) depicted the social and economic problem by portraying the laborers and the migrants. His work was clear and bold in its narrative of the oppression of minorities and the loss of humanity due to globalization and industrialization. Moreover, the AIDS crisis was introduced into the framework of narrative photography as one of the important topics. The epidemic had its impact on the personal lives of people and communities, and it was documented by photographers such as Nan Goldin, who took intimate and touching pictures to raise awareness of the problem and make the audience empathize with the victims.

Economic Factors

The economic aspects and the technologies also played a great role in shaping up the narrative photography during the 1980s and 1990s which were the years of change. The nature of business and the old techniques of doing business were changed when analog photography was replaced by digital photography. The immense costs connected with film and advancement were

gradually evacuated and supplanted by the accessibility and simplicity of the computerized cameras and altering software. This progress allowed story photographic artists to work more efficiently and try all the more unreservedly and to productively produce more work. The traditional photography businesses were forced to change or to disappear during the mid-1990s economic downturn and technological innovation. Kodak's decline is an example of how the industry transformed due to competition and innovations in the market. Kodak, which was once a leading brand in the photography sector, failed to capture the emerging digital market, which is a good example of how businesses need to change to a new economic reality (Wang et al., 2021). Digital technology enhanced the possibilities of telling a story through the work of narrative photographers. The use of digital cameras made it easier to take and share photos for photographers, and the technology became more accessible and versatile, increasing its influence. For instance, through the use of software such as Adobe Photoshop, the narrative photographers were in a position to augment their visual stories in manners that were hitherto unthought of. Economic considerations also played a role in the development of the themes of narrative photography.

Environmental and Ethical Considerations

In the 1980s and 1990s, environmental awareness emerged obviously in the photographic work, and some photographers such as Ansel Adams raised questions about preservation through powerful pictures. Ethical considerations also arose, particularly regarding the management of images. The manipulation of Public Geographic's 1982 cover, which shifted the location of the pyramids of Giza using computer technology, initiated debates over credibility and ethics in photography. Therefore, photographic artists and foundations began to establish guidelines to maintain the respectability as identified in the guidelines of the World Press Photograph's stringent no to digital manipulation. Such enhancements included the topic of ethical and environmentally responsible practices that the genre was now required to promote.

Conclusion

The period of 1980s and 1990s can be considered as pioneering a long time for narrative photography as it was characterized by major technological, cultural, and economic shifts. New media technology impacted the traditional practices of photography, for instance, the change from the use of the analog camera to the digital camera and the introduction of programming such as Photoshop. The political and social movements affected the topics in the photographs, such as Nan Goldin and David Goldblatt, who solved critical issues of their era. Recall changes for commercial photography and the rise of stock photography, economic movements re-imagined the market elements. Environmental and ethical considerations emerged as crucial, forcing photographic artists to adopt other more reliable practices. This article has described how these changes transformed the nature of narrative photography, highlighting its evolving role in visual media. In the future, the genre will likely continue to improve, incorporate new technologies, and continue to uphold its responsibility to ethical storytelling.

Part 2: Choose two photographers whose work exemplify the changes in the genre you have identified in Part 1. Discuss how their work represents the changes you have identified

Introduction

The narrative photography, which is famous for its ability to capture and depict real stories, underwent radical transformations during the 1980s and 1990s. Having been characterized by raw portrayals of social and political real factors, this genre experienced critical movements due to technological advancement and socio-cultural transformation (Azoulay, 2024). These changes are best embodied by Sebastião Salgado with his powerfully poignant images of workers and refugees and Nan Goldin whose raw and intimate portrayals of shrunk down communities heralded a new trend in personal documentary photography. This paper analyses how both Salgado and Goldin's functions are reflective of the broader shifts in narrative photography during this period.

Photographer 1: Sebastião Salgado

Brief Biography of the Photographer and His Major Achievements

Sebastião Salgado was born on February 8, 1944, in Aimorés, Brazil, and is a well-known story picture taker who focuses on the social and environmental concerns. He started as a financial analyst and entered the field of photography in mid-1970s to bring a fresh vision to the art of photography and visual journalism.

Analysis and Key Works Workers (1986-1992)

This series depicts the suffering of the unskilled workers in different parts of the world through striking scenes such as gold miners at Serra Pelada in Brazil that depict human strength and economic oppression.

Emigrants from 1993 to 1999

'Relocation's examines dislodging resulting from financial factors, political, and natural factors. Powerful images from Rwanda, former Yugoslavia and Latin America show the cost of global unrest.

Reflecting Changes

Salgado then moved to digital photography which enhances distribution and clarity. He mainly depicts environmental and moral concerns as well as sociopolitical movements and

economic oppression (Pinto et al., 2020). It is through Salgado's story photography that one is able to capture the impact of globalization on reduced social circles.



Figure 1 Gold Mine of Serra Pelada, Brazil (1986)

Source: <https://www.robertkleingallery.com/viewing-room/2/>



Figure 2 Kibeho Refugee Camp, Rwanda (1994)

Source: <https://www.9news.com.au/national/kibeho-massacre-how-australian-defence-soldiers-saved-people-rwanda-george-gittoes-exclusive/ceed6197-91c7-4de8-bf61-44baac644768>

Analysis of How Their Work Exemplifies the Technological, Cultural, Social, Economic, Environmental, and Ethical Changes Discussed in Part 1

Technological Advancements

The transition to digital photography in the last part of the 1990s is a significant shift in Salgado's training. Whereas his initial work in "Laborers" was done on film, his later projects incorporated digital technology, as he deemed the latter to be more versatile and precise in capturing and handling images (da Costa and Rios, 2022). It is evident in the increased detail and apparent scope of his photos, enhancing their relevance and visual presence near home. The digital organization also helped in the faster spread of his pictures, broadening their reach and impact.

Cultural and Social Changes

Thus, it is possible to state that socio-political movements of the given period are closely interrelated with Salgado's work. His "Laborers" series reflects the global shifts of the 1980s and presents the often-invisible population that fueled the advancement. The move towards culture of globalization is evident in "Movements" where Salgado captures the effects of economic divergence and political upheavals, amplifying the toll of these global anomalies on human lives.

Economic Elements

Economic pathologist and their consequences on people are themes that are at the heart of Salgado's work. In "Laborers," he focuses on the strenuous conditions of excavators, manor workers, and manufacturing plant workers, making one realize the deceit inherent in the global economy. The series also documents these circumstances while also examining the economic systems that perpetuate them.

Environmental and Ethical Contemplation

In his later works, particularly the "Relocations" series, Salgado captures the environmental factors that are forcing people to migrate. His photos of dry spell-stricken districts and deforested scenes depict the social bond between environmental degradation and human suffering (Memou, 2020). In the ethical way of handling the photography, Salgado is very much careful in portraying his subjects and makes sure that they maintain their dignity in the portrayal of hardship.

Application of Explorations of Explicit Models and Delineations

Among the most striking images of the series "Laborers" is "Treasure trove of Serra Pelada, Brazil" (1986) where thousands of men work in the enormous opencast mine. The emotional setup of the photo and the incredible human stunts, clearly portray the physical and economic exploitation experienced by these workers. Another one more giant picture from "Movements" is

“Kibeho Outcast Camp, Rwanda” (1994) that depicts the desperation and energy of the refugees in the middle of the consequences of Rwandan genocide.

Photographer 2: Nan Goldin

Brief Biography of the Photographer

Nan Goldin was born on September 12, 1953, in Washington, D.C., and she is one of the most influential and provocative American photographers of the contemporary era, who documented her life and the lives of her friends and lovers in a raw and intimate manner (Frewen, 2021). Sexuality is often an essential aspect of Goldin’s work, and her pieces often depict queer subcultures, relationships, and struggles with addiction. After graduating from the School of the Gallery of Expressive arts in Boston, she shifted to New York City in the last part of the 1970s and became an essential piece of midtown expressions.

Analysis and Key Works

The emotions and the stories of the Sexually Dependent Goldin and her friends love, violence, and AIDS are depicted in this slideshow and book.

I’ll Be Your Mirror (1996)

The potency of storytelling remains as this project builds upon the notions of closeness and self hood. Adapting to Change In the late 1990s, Goldin stopped using 35mm film and embraced change and started using digital which enabled her to try out different things (Cotton 2004). Her work portrays the transformation of culture of the LGBTQ+ community, challenges the society’s indifference towards the AIDS epidemic, and advocates for the right representation and the portrayal of the true self.

Analysis of How Their Work Exemplifies the Technological, Cultural, Social, Economic, Environmental, and Ethical Changes Discussed in Part 1

Technological Advancements

Goldin mainly shot with a 35mm camera with variety film, thus adopting the grainy, soaked aesthetic that became synonymous with her work (Pinckney, D., 2020). In the early stages of her career, she worked in analog but towards the end of the 1990s she started embracing digital technology, which she considered to be more remarkable trial and error and more extensive dissemination of her pictures.

Cultural and Social Changes

Goldin's work is a perfect chronicle of the cultural and social transformation of the 1980s and 1990s especially among the people of the LGBTQ+ community. Her pictures offer an unvarnished perspective on the lives of her friends and boyfriends, many of whom were marginalized by society (de Beer and de Beer, 2020). The realistic portrayal of relationships, intimacy, and the effects of the AIDS' plague provides a powerful rebuttal to the often-mocking representations in the mainstream media.



Figure 3 Nan and Brian in Bed, New York City, 1983

Source: <https://www.moca.org/collection/work/nan-and-brian-in-bed-new-york-city>



Figure 4 Cookie at Tin Pan Alley, New York City, 1983

Source: <https://www.moca.org/collection/work/cookie-at-tin-pan-alley-new-york-city>

Economic Elements

The economic challenges faced by Goldin and her subjects are evident from the photos. In her pictures, she often captures the struggle for survival in the harsh urban environment of New York. The economic problems of the period, compounded by the measures that the Reagan organization took, are evident in the weakness and strength of her local area (Ja-ram and Jong-hoon, 2020). Goldin's work highlights the issues of social stratification that affected her subjects, and the merging of the economic class and personal adversity.

Environmental and Ethical Contemplations

Goldin's photos also appeal with the environmental and ethical concerns of her time. For instance, her depiction of the Guides emergency is at once an individual and a political performance that challenges the ethical apathy and embarrassment around the scourge.

Use of Explicit Models and Line Drawings

Among the most popular photos of “The Ditty of Sexual Reliance” is “Nan and Brian in Bed, New York City, 1983” that depicts a private and passionate moment between Goldin and her then-boyfriend. The crude tilt and frailty in this photo embody her earnest approach to preserving personal relationships (Muckle, 2020). Another powerful picture is ‘Treat at Tin Skillet Back Street, New York City, 1983’ with her friend Treat Mueller, who has been living with Helps and died from this sickness, which is also important for Goldin’s story.

Comparative Analysis

It is necessary to underline that Sebastião Salgado and Nan Goldin both contributed to the reformation of narrative photography; however, their approaches and engagements are different and can be regarded as specific responses to the changes of the time. Through series such as “Laborers” and “Relocations” Salgado captured great, global narratives that addressed economic and social concerns from a humanistic perspective while raising questions about environmental and ethical concerns. In contrast, Goldin’s crude, personal photographs in ‘The Song of Sexual Reliance’ provided an instinctive, personal account of overlooked networks and the Guides crisis, emphasizing the cultural and social struggles (Hempel, A., 2019). Both were preoccupied with economic fluctuations and suffering, but Salgado’s photographs were distinguished by their global scope and formal construction, while Goldin’s were characterized by personal engagement and intense immediacy.

Conclusion

To a limited extent 2, we reviewed how Sebastião Salgado and Nan Goldin demonstrated the shift in narrative photography in the 1980s and 1990s. For example, his global reports such as “Laborers” and “Relocations” focused on economic and environmental concerns with stunning, well-composed images. On the other hand, Goldin’s crude pictures in ‘The Song of Sexual Reliance’ provided a highly personal view on reduced networks and the Guides crisis, which was social and cultural. The two picture takers centered their subjects on human suffering and adaptability, but they did it in different ways, extent, and focus. Reiterating the postulation, their

works describe the evolution of the genre based on technological, cultural, social, economic, environmental, and ethical developments. Salgado's global presence and Goldin's own experiences in general expanded the use and influence of narrative photography, which was an incredible boon for social progress.

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