

16 Ways of Looking at a Photograph

Class Exercise: Chapter 16, Digital photography

Digitization changes photography. Photoshop and similar programs make it easy to change the way a photograph looks, even to make a photograph show something that isn't real. And yet, photography has always been a medium that could be manipulated. What is really different about the digital is the way it changes how we store and circulate photographs. With digitization, we circulate images by posting them on social media, and we store them on electronic devices. Before widespread digitization, photographs were physical objects in the world, circulated in the way that objects must be—physically. We mailed photographs, kept them in our wallets, hung them on our walls. Of course, people still do print and frame photographs, even after two decades of digital photography. For this exercise, open your phone and look at the photos section. How many of these images have you printed and framed to keep around you? What motivated you to choose those images to print and frame? What is different about a photograph that exists as an object and one that is merely data stored in a device? Do you often print photographs that mean more to you than others? Why choose to print those special images?