

ARTIST COMPLEX

IMAGES OF ARTISTS IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY PHOTOGRAPHY

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ARTIST COMPLEX

IMAGES OF ARTISTS IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY
PHOTOGRAPHY

EDITED BY JADWIGA KAMOLA

DE GRUYTER

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PREFACE

The history of photography in its full breadth and diversity is a vast field, one that the Kunstbibliothek and its Collection of Photography at the Museum für Fotografie in Berlin helps cultivate through exhibitions, research projects, and symposia. Here, the history of art photography is not the only area of focus. Just looking at the manifold ways in which photography is used reveals what a singular medium it is, one that has changed human communication and ways of perceiving the world like no other. By going to our exhibitions at the Museum für Fotografie, visitors can embark on a journey of discovery: How are microscopes used to take photographs? How were people in India photographed in the nineteenth century? How did photographers create an image of modern-day Brazil? How do photographs shape our image of the German Revolution of 1918–1919 in Berlin?

Equally important is the innovative work done in the core areas of the history of photography. Mounting the exhibition *Artist Complex. Photographic Portraits from Baselitz to Warhol. Platen Collection* in the summer of 2018, we were able to present an outstanding collection of artist portraits. Viewers of an artist portrait expect to learn something about the creative process, perhaps even about the motivations and essential character of the artist. In our approach to the exhibition at the Museum für Fotografie and to the accompanying book publication, we started from the basic thesis that a photographic portrait can only ever be an interpretation of what the photographer has seen, perhaps even felt, and that it can only develop its efficacy from the creative power of the people in front of and behind the camera. In producing such an image, the photographer and the artist enter a creative dialogue: This appears to be one of the main reasons why so many books and exhibitions have been dedicated to this subject and related collections have been amassed. The works shown at our museum were collected by Angelika Platen, herself a noted portraitist of artists, who, with the eye of both a passionate photographer and a devoted collector, developed a multifaceted kaleidoscope of the genre, reassuring herself of the foundations of her own work.

The concept of the artist is often linked to genius, originality and imaginativeness. Central literary and philosophical works invoke an analogy between the artist's creative process and divine creation, proclaiming the artist a godlike creator.

Here, it may be observed that these notions are often built around the idea of the male, virile artist. Our exhibition encompassed the idea of the artist in all its many facets, an idea that has become articulated throughout centuries of intellectual history, taking distinct shape in the twentieth century in the photographic image.

It goes without saying that an exhibition and a catalogue do not come close to exhausting this topic area. A two-day conference opened up numerous new perspectives. We would like to thank Jadwiga Kamola, formerly assistant in training at the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, for her clear-sighted concept for, and attentive organization of, the symposium *Artist Complex. Images of Artists in Photography*, held in October 2018, which led to the contributions that have been gathered in this book. The symposium, like the exhibition, was made possible by the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, with the generous support of the Sparkassen-Finanzgruppe, the main sponsor of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Our sincere thanks also go to Bettina Gockel for accepting these contributions for publication in the distinguished series *Studies in Theory and History of Photography*.

Moritz Wullen

Director of the Kunstbibliothek,
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin –
Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz

Ludger Derenthal

Head of the Collection of Photography
at the Kunstbibliothek

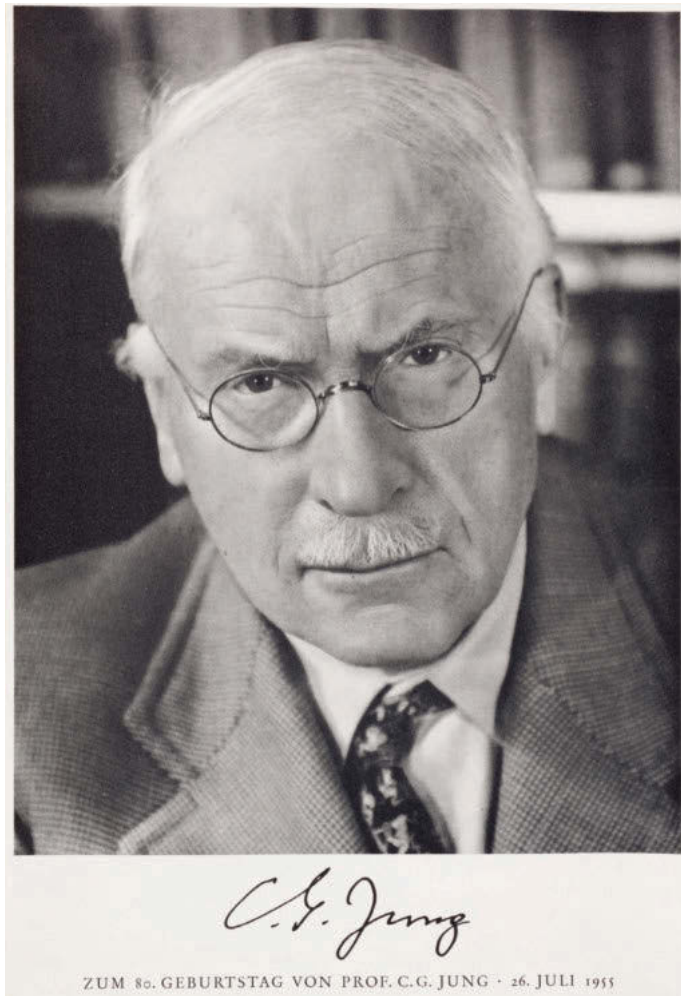
ARTIST COMPLEX. THINKING PHOTOGRAPHY WITH CARL
GUSTAV JUNG

“In these circumstances it is not at all surprising that the artist is an especially interesting specimen for the critical analysis of the psychologist.”

Carl Gustav Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature*

What do photography and Carl Gustav Jung have in common? For one thing, there is the fact that the extant likenesses of Carl Gustav Jung are all photographic portraits. The Berlin State Library holds one such black-and-white portrait (fig. 1). Along with Jung's signature, it carries the title “Zum 80. Geburtstag von Prof. C. G. Jung” (On Prof. C.G. Jung's 80th birthday, July 26, 1955). There are no indications as to the identity of the photographer or the context in which it was created. Extant today as a single sheet affixed to a cardboard backing, the image might have originally been part of a commemorative publication. The State Library also holds a corresponding work created for the psychologist's eightieth birthday, titled *Studien zur analytischen Psychologie C. G. Jungs* (Studies on the Analytic Psychology of C.G. Jung). Just as the foreword to the commemorative publication “honors [Jung's] spiritual enrichment,”¹ the photograph shows the psychologist as an established older scientist wearing glasses and a suit. Bent forward, with eyes pressed together and eyebrows drawn down, Jung seems to be peering into the viewer's inner being.

The focus of both photography and psychology is the world of human emotions. Where there is a person in a photographic image, the face is often at the center. It serves as the proverbial “window” to the soul, while the photograph is understood as the “true image”² that is closest to reality. A photograph renders a “truth” visible. At the same time, the face stiffens to become a “mask.”³ This tension between the unadulterated ego and the mask that hides the ego was especially recognized by Jung. If asked what this photographic portrait has to say about him, Jung would have likely responded by quoting himself and asserting that the image could not make any statements about the character traits of the sitter. After all, it



— 1: Carl Gustav Jung, 1955, gelatin silver print. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Handschriftenabteilung.

shows only his persona or “a mask that *feigns individuality*, and tries to make others and oneself believe that one is individual, whereas one is simply playing a part in which the collective psyche speaks.”⁴ The mask is a fragment of the collective psyche and “a compromise between individual and society [*Sozietät*] as to what a man should appear to be.”⁵ What is being referred to here is the part of the ego that assures socially acceptable behavior on the part of the individual vis-à-vis his environment and can thus be interpreted as an appearance or a “false self.” Nevertheless, Jung acknowledges that “with the persona the unconscious self, one’s real individuality, is always present and makes itself felt indirectly if not directly.”⁶

Jung’s statement touches on a central paradox in pictorial science, which is intrinsic to the photographic image and to any other depiction of the human face.

A picture shows the “true” interior of the human being and at the same time does not show it. In portrait photography, what is revealed in the interstice between the random moment in which a shot is taken and the studied pose is a characteristic trait of the sitter that is coextensive with the ego. In Jung’s portrait it is his tie, which has slid to the side. It runs contrary to the representative portrait and suggests a private, almost chaotic character trait on the part of the psychologist, one that is not supposed to make an appearance.

ARTIST ARCHETYPES AND THE PHOTOGRAPHIC PERSONA

With his essays and lectures on art from the 1920s to 1940s, which were compiled as *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature* in the fifteenth volume of the *Collected Works*, Jung distinguished himself with considerations regarding a “psychology of the artwork” and a “psychology of the artist.” *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature* takes up two of his central notions, the idea of the archetype in the collective unconscious and the complex, as propounded by Freud. Jung designates the creative process, the sum of all activities that bring a work to completion, as the “autonomous creative complex.” In it, an “unconscious activation of an archetypal image”⁷ takes place. Like every complex, the creative complex also exhibits an “analogy with pathological processes.”⁸ It develops in such a way that “a hitherto unconscious portion of the psyche is thrown into activity,” conscious interests and activities diminish, while “the infantile and archaic”⁹ begin to penetrate consciousness. The completed artwork thereupon refers to an “archetype” or, with a view to the art historian Jacob Burckhardt, to a “primordial image” from the collective unconscious. This is the psychological matrix that surpasses the personal and is inherited. The primordial image is a figure

“be it a demon, a human being, or a process – that constantly recurs in the course of history and appears wherever creative fantasy is freely expressed. Essentially, therefore, it is a mythological figure.”¹⁰

Jung emphasizes that it is not the individual character of the sitter or the artist that surfaces in the artwork; rather, the nature of the artwork allows an inference to be made about the “character of the age” in which it was created. In this context, Jung is not interested in the achievement or the repute of the individual artist, but rather in the social significance of the art and its creator. Art is always working on the “education of the age,” and the artist is always “educating the spirit of the age” and acting as a “mouthpiece of his time.”¹¹ In Jungian thought, the artist is not only an individual creature but “collective man,” “a vehicle and moulder of the unconscious psychic life of mankind.”¹² He is a figure composed of different images, an archetype like Goethe’s Faust, “of the Wise Old Man, the helper and redeemer, but

also of the magician, deceiver, corrupter, and temper,”¹³ or else like James Joyce’s Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus, the protagonist and antagonist in *Ulysses*, who represent the figures of “spiritual and carnal man.”¹⁴ For Jung, *Ulysses* is not a book but “the creator-god in Joyce,” “a microcosm of James Joyce,” “the demiurge in the artist.”¹⁵

In this conceptual framework, photography can be conceived as a mechanism that over the course of centuries moves layered archetypes of artists from the collective unconscious to the surface of the collective consciousness. The camera extracts as it were an artist archetype and captures it in the image. In the interaction between the photographer and the photographed, the image of an artist is communally created; this is tantamount to the creation of an actual person and is itself an artistic creation. At the same time the created image is always a likeness of an already existing artist image, which recurs in the medium of photography. In the twentieth century, the collotype technique, which made it possible to mass reproduce images in magazines, books, or as placards on exterior walls, contributed to the social dissemination, the consolidation, and the perpetuation of these images. One need only think of prominent artists such as Pablo Picasso and Frida Kahlo, whose painterly work is inseparable from their photographic likenesses. In the case of Frida Kahlo, what immediately comes to mind are the characteristic monobrow and the artist’s traditional Tehuana clothing.¹⁶ The experience of a life-threatening accident was captured by Kahlo in her paintings, which on the one hand show her wounded body, and on the other the artist’s torso, straight as a pin, paralyzed and supported by a corset. We have Lola Álvarez Bravo, Imogen Cunningham, Gisèle Freund, Nickolas Muray, and Bernard Silberstein to thank for the conceptual construction of this woman artist who was strong in spite of this stroke of fate (fig. 2). Their photographic portraits are as well known as Kahlo’s artworks, which were popularized in lifestyle magazines like *Life* and *Vogue* by showing them alongside her photographic likenesses in color. Paraphrasing Jung, it can be said that not only did Kahlo’s work bring forth Kahlo the artist,¹⁷ but that photographs of Kahlo made her the famous artist she came to be, known the world over.¹⁸

The above considerations constitute the guiding thoughts for this compilation of articles, whose contributions derive from the symposium *Artist Complex. Images of Artists in Photography*, held at the Museum für Fotografie, a museum of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. The symposium followed the exhibition *Artist Complex. Photographic Portraits from Baselitz to Warhol. Platen Collection*, which explored a range of photographic portraits of artists. Examined using the headings *Persona*, *Creativity* and *Pygmalion*, self-portraits by artists showing them with brush, palette, and camera, costumed or as caricatures, along with likenesses of artists at work in their studio, surrounded by their works, were coupled with metaphors from the history of ideas that construct the artist persona. These metaphors come from philosophical, literary and art-theoretical works.



— 2: Bernard Silberstein, Frida Kahlo, 1940, gelatin silver print, Platen Collection, Berlin.

In his *Critique of Judgment* (1791), Immanuel Kant writes that “fine art is possible only as the product of genius.” The “product of fine art” is characterized above all by the quality of “originality.”¹⁹ Here, the originality of the artistic product reflects the talent of the originator, who enters the stage—in a fully Jungian way—not as *creator* but instead stands figuratively close to *creation*. Kant emphasizes that the originator does not himself know “how he came by the ideas for it” and remarks in parentheses:

“(Indeed that is presumably why the word genius is derived from [Latin] *genius* [which means] the guardian and guiding spirit that each person is given as his own at birth, and to whose inspiration [*Eingebung*] those original ideas are due.)”²⁰

The artist is the medium of genius, which belongs to nature. Through genius, nature finds expression in the product of genius.²¹ Kant’s notion of genius here was contributing to a far-reaching debate that had flared up around this term in the eighteenth century. Kant’s nature-derived genius is opposed to Novalis’s romantic artist who distinguishes himself through his own productivity, who wants to develop the “thought of a world system a priori from out of the depths of our spirit [...]”²² For Novalis it is the artist himself who produces art, not nature. Kant’s conception of the artist as a dirigible tool of nature and Novalis’s ideal of the active “total genius”²³ that can sprout in any direction, create space for the subsequent construct of the modern artist framed in pathological terms. Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890) was said to be “un terrible et affolé génie, [...] toujours relevant presque de la pathologie,” a neurotic who suffered like a “femme hystérique.”²⁴ In the artist manifestos of the early twentieth century avant-garde, the definition of this figure was extended to include qualities like autonomy and creativity. In André Breton’s Surrealist manifesto of 1924, the artist becomes an apologist of madness, imagination, and freedom.²⁵ Wyndham Lewis, in his manifesto for English Vorticism, caustically attacked this romantically-inspired continental European artistry, proclaiming with a sting:

“6. To believe that it is necessary or conducive to art to ‘improve’ life, for instance—make architecture, dress, ornament, in better ‘taste’, is absurd. 7. The art instinct is permanently primitive. [...] 9. The artist of the modern movement is a savage. In no sense of an ‘advanced’, perfected, democratic, Futurist individual of Mr. Marinetti’s limited imagination [...]”²⁶

This image of the modern artist, whose identity oscillates between creation, creator, and a withdrawn, unsocial figure, manifested itself in photography.

The discourse around the English painter Francis Bacon (1909–1992) shows that photography is far more than a source of inspiration and working material used for making paintings. Looking at Bacon’s career, the question may be asked how the self-taught artist from Northern Ireland was able, “with absolutely no artistic training and no special talent”²⁷ to become “the finest British painter of the present age.”²⁸ Photography played a significant role in shaping Bacon’s profile in intellectual public life and in positioning his artist persona in art history. It was especially after the large Tate retrospective in 1962 that public perception of Bacon changed in such a way that he was no longer a “morbid maverick” but a “modern master” and a “genius of violence,” whose work was shown in exhibitions alongside

paintings by John Constable and Vincent van Gogh.²⁹ Around the same time, Bacon showed an intensified interest in photography. For the first time in 1962, he commissioned John Deakin to take photographs of friends of his, including George Dyer, Lucian Freud, and Isabel Rawsthorne. Deakin's portrait photographs, which Bacon deliberately furnished with dashes of paint, creases, folds, and tears, enjoy a status that transcends their function as pure memory aids.³⁰ They stand in the place of the individuals while also serving as "triggers for ideas."³¹ In the absence of these individuals and equipped only with Deakin's photographs, the artist was able to practice the "injury,"³² which he carried out with the brush and various other painting tools, without worrying about personal sensitivities.

Photographers such as John Deakin and Henri Cartier-Bresson present Bacon as a painter of violence and the flesh between two sides of meat, as a coffee-drinking intellectual with the French writer Michel Leiris, in a conversation with the art historian Michael Peppiatt, and finally, in harmony with the *Interviews with Francis Bacon*, as a painter of the accidental³³ in the iconic chaos of his studio in London's Reece Mews. The photographer Francis Giacobetti accompanied Bacon in his final months of life from 1991 to 1992. In his photographs, Giacobetti avails himself of Bacon's array of motifs, staging the artist as a sunken-in figure in front of a round mirror, as the observer of a hanging cadaver, or as a smeared shadow of a figure. In Giacobetti's photographs, the artist persona, created through discourse and by Bacon himself—an elusive "enigma"—and Bacon's supposedly mysterious work become interwoven. In an interview with Giacobetti, the painter stylized himself on the one hand as an established artist whose work was exhibited in prominent museums and was oriented on modernist heavyweights: "Picasso is the reason why I paint. He is the father figure who gave me the wish to paint."³⁴ On the other hand, he assigns himself a marginal societal position and attributes a narcissistic quality to artists in general: "All artists are vain, they long to be recognized, and to leave something to posterity, they want to be loved and at the same time they want to be free."³⁵ This portrayal of the artist as both a master and an outsider longing for recognition corresponds with the fact that Bacon's oeuvre, while suggestive in its motifs of painters like Lucian Freud, Frank Auerbach, and Georg Baselitz, has yet to be clearly assigned to a specific artistic style. It oscillates between a "surrealist impulse," a "realism,"³⁶ "the classical avant-garde," and abstract expressionism.³⁷

In conversation with Giacobetti, Bacon refutes the recurring accusation that in his paintings he imitates photographic movement in the style of the chronophotography of Eadweard Muybridge: "People have always thought that I took my movement from photographs, but it is completely untrue. I invent what I paint."³⁸ For Bacon, photographs have a fundamentally different ontological status than paintings: "[...] their reality is stronger than reality itself. [...] Photography for me brings us back to the actual event, more clearly, more directly."³⁹ In this context, we hear a resounding of topoi of Kantian artistic originality, brought forth through the genius of the nature-led artist, and of topoi of the Novalian capacity for invention by

the creatively active individual. These topoi meet with metaphors of the singularity of the painted image as the product of the spirit and a counterpart to photography as the product of something close to reality. Bacon ends the conversation with the conclusion, “This is the artist’s privilege—to be ageless.” He is not simply referring to his own 82-year-old artist ego here, but to an ideational image of himself as an artist, which does not age and was brought forth by photography.

In this image we do not find the formula for the persona of a woman artist. The art historian Bettina Gockel has pointed out that the terms “genius, sage, shepherd, monk [...] were and remain anything but easy for women to adapt to. There is either no equal and equivalent role or the artistic concept cannot be sustained because it was too lastingly shaped or codified by men over the course of centuries.”⁴⁰ The question remains as to which independent models women artists are at all able to take orientation from and whether a unique and sustainable image can be established. In the male-dominated world of painting, a female re-creation of this formula is particularly difficult to achieve. The example of Frida Kahlo makes it clear that an independent persona of a woman artist exists and yet is quickly attended by comparisons to male painters. For her image of herself, Kahlo drew from her intensely colorful array of motifs and (like Bacon) configured a template for an independent outsider, always dressing as a Tehuana in photographic portraits. At the same time, her illness (like Bacon’s asthma), which bound her to her bed, was decisive in shaping her choice of motifs. All her life, Kahlo’s work was compared with that of her husband, Diego Rivera (1886–1957) and was overshadowed by him, by his aesthetics and prominent image as Mexico’s leading muralist and a political revolutionary. This had an ongoing negative impact on Kahlo in her role as a woman artist and a politically engaged personality.⁴¹ In photography, this situation appears to be easier. A woman can take up the camera without having gone to art school. Photography, moreover, was not considered to be art per se, but rather a documentary medium, something that allowed women photographers such as Florence Henri (1893–1982), Gertrude Käsebier (1852–1934), and Vivian Maier (1926–2009) to create their own self-images outside the art world, which are captivating above all due to their androgyny. Even Frida Kahlo, who entered the history of photography by adopting Tehuana identity,⁴² surprisingly features as a young man in a black-and-white family photograph taken by her father Guillermo in 1926; standing, dressed in a suit, her arm leaning against the shoulder of a male family member, her person supports the familial structure and the composition of the photograph.

“AS LIFE-LIKE AS POSSIBLE”

What is it about photography that predestines it for the portrayal of the artistic persona? In the photographic image, metaphors of the artist as a creator, as creation, and as a medium (of genius) fuse with metaphors of photography as a creation coming from nature and as a medium (of a character). The photograph is the “truest” and “most life-like” image communicating the character of a person, including the character of an artist. These attributes have been pointed to repeatedly in the history of photography. Most prominently, Walter Benjamin in 1936 attested to photography’s status as a mechanical product, which, although lacking an aura, possessed mimetic qualities.⁴³ At the time of its invention in the mid-nineteenth century, photography was metaphorically linked not so much to that which is “mechanically printed” but to “pictorial productions,”⁴⁴ that is to manually produced prints, watercolors and paintings. In the first artistic and scientific books containing photographs, a metaphor involving drawing and the guided distribution of light begins to emerge in connection with the photographic image. In William Henry Fox Talbot’s *The Pencil of Nature* (1844), which makes one of the first attempts to use calotypes in a book (or in this case a portfolio), photography is described in the sense of the title phrase as a “pencil of nature” and also as a “photogenic drawing,”⁴⁵ which literally means “drawing with light.” In this context, the literary scholar Laura Saltz has pointed out the obsolete meaning of “pencil:” In the mid-nineteenth century, a pencil was not primarily understood as a drawing tool but as a “ray or a narrow beam of light.” Here, the discoveries in physics during that period suggest an understanding of light as a wave rather than a particle.⁴⁶

While photography was conceptualized as a pencil, it did not carry the connotation of originating from the hand of an individual artist. Rather, it is an “impression” whose originator is light or rather nature itself:

“It may suffice, then, to say, that the plates of this work have been obtained by the mere action of Light upon sensitive paper. They have been formed or depicted by optical and chemical means alone, and without the aid of any one acquainted with the art of drawing. [...] They are impressed by Nature’s hand.”⁴⁷

In this sense, Talbot ultimately construed photography as “nature’s painting.”⁴⁸ Accordingly, his photographic endeavors resulted in “natural images,”⁴⁹ which were simultaneously chemical products. Talbot held that they were objects that pointed to nature as a generative agent, that were to be understood as “demonstration pieces” of a new technology, prompting him to refer to them as “specimens”⁵⁰ when his images were first exhibited at the Royal Institution in 1839.⁵¹

Meanwhile, the natural sciences and medicine were developing similar metaphors for photography. Dermatological atlases, which featured hand-colored pho-



— 3: Arthur de Montméja, Impétigo, hand-colored woodburytype, 1882, in Alfred Hardy and Arthur de Montméja, *Clinique Photographique des Maladies de la Peau*, Paris, Librairie Chamerot et Lauwereyns, 1882.

tographs of sick patients, extolled the “life-like” and “natural” appearance of their illustrations. In the nineteenth century, the central ambition of photography was to enliven its monochrome images, which were generally seen as lifeless and which were in competition with their painted counterparts, using the visual rhetoric of color.⁵² The authors feared that the monochrome prints would be “lying,”⁵³ which explains the large number of color reproductions that were based on photographs. Painters and draughtsmen who specialized in medical images were simultaneously photographers and learned physicians, such as Thomas Godart (?–1888) and Leonard Portal Mark (1855–1930), both of whom worked at St. Bartholomew’s Hospital in London. The dermatologist Alfred Hardy and the ophthalmologist and amateur photographer Arthur de Montméja, who were the first to use photography to portray skin and venereal diseases in France, declared in their joint publication *Clinique photographique de l’Hôpital Saint-Louis* (1868): “We can say that the plates present nature caught in the act.”⁵⁴ Montméja’s plates are additionally signed with “De Montmeja ad naturam phot. et pinx,” which places the photographic prints in the tradition of the Old Masters, who boasted that they were able to paint things “from life.”⁵⁵ Here the photographic image claims—under the aegis of science—a proximity to nature that had until that time been reserved for painting, and it recited an old topos of art history, namely that of the vitality of painting.⁵⁶

In the photographic patient portraits, it is precisely the pigment applied by hand that was to bring the photographic image to life. In every way following the topoi of Renaissance painting, which is built around color and life,⁵⁷ photography is a “drawing that is brought to life by color.”⁵⁸ The founder of the American Dermatological Association, George Henry Fox, stated in the foreword to his *Photographic Illustrations of Skin Diseases* (1880) that the aim was “to present their features with photographic accuracy; and to employ color with the utmost care to render the illustrations as life-like as possible.”⁵⁹ The publication featuring forty-eight photographic patient portraits was one of the first dermatological atlases and was followed until 1905 by further multi-volume editions.

The life of the breathing body animated by means of pigment primarily manifests itself in the flesh tones of the person depicted in the photograph. In the portraits of patients, whose features emerge in yellow, deep red, and black, these tones are of a pathological nature (fig. 3) and are described ekphrastically as part of an “iconographie dermatologique”⁶⁰ to allow a clinical interpretation that is as precise as possible. In medical practice, in clinical or in educational contexts, the plates replaced the patients, like Bacon’s photographs of friends: “Because nobody is able to continuously have vivid examples of cutaneous affections in front of their eyes, we have tried to replace the ill with colored plates.”⁶¹ At an aesthetic level, the photographs corresponded with the art-theoretical metaphors relaying a proximity to nature, and they even surpassed them insofar as they figured as human representatives.

PHOTOGRAPHIC CHARACTER

If photographs are “substitutive media”⁶² par excellence, the question that remains, following Talbot, is this: What is it actually that becomes “impressed” into the light-sensitive paper through nature? What is the essence of this imprinting? What is it that is to be extracted from the photograph? The photograph embodies and transmits a character. When the shutter release is triggered, the character of a person or an object becomes “imprinted” in the photograph in a physiognomic sense. According to Johann Caspar Lavater, the “master physiognomist” of the eighteenth century, physiognomy as the only “true” science extracts from the “outer appearance” “the physiological, the temperamental character, the medical, the physical, the intellectual, the moral [...] [character] and so forth.”⁶³ Character, according to Lavater, could be extracted in particular from the outline of a silhouette. Silhouettes were originally traced as a shadowgraph, using a shadowgraph machine. The shadowgraph was considered “the truest and most faithful image because it is printed directly from nature.”⁶⁴ Seen metaphorically as a monochrome drawing and “nature’s imprint,” photography is intrinsically linked to the practice of physiognomy, which is committed to a black-and-white epistemology of character

interpretation and considers shadowgraphs as the “truest” images. In his *Physiognomic Fragments* (1775–1778), Lavater even names a practical use for the camera obscura, a precursor of photography. It was especially useful when one wanted to draw the head smaller.⁶⁵

The same period saw a (renewed) popularization and an ideational as well as practical cross-fertilization of photography and physiognomy. Before the emergence of the sciences that based their premises on empirical evidence and experiment, nineteenth-century physiognomy was an explanatory paradigm that spanned both the sciences and the arts. Hence we see an accordingly large number⁶⁶ of works and new editions increasingly illustrated with photographs of older treatises bearing “physiognomy” in the title. Here, a distinction needs to be made between the older physiognomic tradition from antiquity to the Baroque period, which was based on the principle of analogy, and the more recent, racially motivated physiognomy, which began with the publication of Lavater’s *Physiognomic Fragments* culminated in the German National Socialism.⁶⁷ In books such as *Physiognomy of the Sick* (1839 and reprinted in 1928), in *Psycho-Physiognomy according to Carl Huter* (1919), in *Physiognomy in Art History* (1926), in the sociological observations about the Renaissance in *Physiognomy and Rhythm of Civil Society Culture* (1932), or in the völkisch-minded *German Physiognomy: A Fundamental Natural History of the Nation’s Faces* (1942), the authors usually consider physiognomy a science, believing that it makes the invisible instantaneously visible. After all, based solely on the facial features and of the body as shown in photographic images, the observer was ostensibly able to “read” the person’s character that had been “inscribed” from birth.

It must not be forgotten, however, that physiognomy not only contributed to the idea of inherent character and genius⁶⁸—an idea which led Kant to his famous statement that a person’s genius was something that was present at birth⁶⁹—but also gave rise to the idea of the innate, inferior and criminal mind that could be recognized in the person’s skull and the face.⁷⁰ Shortly after the publication of Lavater’s *Physiognomic Fragments*, Franz Joseph Gall and Johann Spurzheim published their *The Anatomy and Physiology of the Nervous System in General* (1809), a doctrine of the skull based on physiognomy, also known as “Phrenology.” In the twentieth century, phrenology spread into the field of eugenics with its photographically illustrated books on criminology, such as Cesare Lombroso’s *Criminal Man* (1876). Fully in line with these physiognomic disciplines, a physiognomy for everyday application became established; it was communicated in books, illustrated with photographs, such as Fritz Lange’s *Language of the Human Face. Scientific Physiognomy and Its Practical Utilization in Life and Art* (1939) and Harry Bondegger’s *Recognizing with Certainty the Character, Abilities and Predispositions, Moods and Attitude of any Person from their Photograph or Outer Appearance, their Gait or the Sound of their Voice* (1904).

In these different contexts, photography served as an epistemically exact and comparatively fast medium, technologically speaking, for the visualization of, for example, mental illnesses. Jean-Martin Charcot’s research on hysteria—brought to