

1. Analog

When the photographer steps out into the world, his interest may be “objective” (directed at the object) or “subjective” (directed at himself); what he inevitably does with each focus and shot, however, is establish a relationship between himself and his object – perhaps emotional, perhaps rational, but always a relationship with light.

The basic idea behind the photographed image is that of threads of light between an object (“reality”) and its image (“representation”). It is a relationship we spontaneously perceive as analog – as “logical” and “proportionate” – because it relates to our own experience: analog photographs are images that we can examine with our own eyes and which we therefore believe.

Photography in this sense means analogizing, or creating parallel structures to the visual world. The camera, in the classical sense, is an analogizing apparatus whose output demands respect, as is known: subsequent reworkings, so long as they are not gradual but structural (as in the case of collages or montages), are viewed as tricks inimical to the process, as “alienations” or “manipulations,” as “lies” or “adulterations” – all terms that no longer have meaning in the digital world.

2. Digital

Digitizing breaks up the threads of analogy and makes them calculable. This does not necessarily mean they are destroyed: the pieces (bits) may still form threads of light, much as dots form a line. Now, however, the pieces are free to leave the chains of analogy and to form swarms or pixel patterns that no longer require an object (“reality”), but rather are fed from algorithms, fractal equations, mathematical formulas.

It goes without saying that the digital (binary, discrete) principle is superior to the analog (continuous) principle. Firstly, it does not require an object in order to create; two conditions (digits) suffice. It is thus universal: the digital code as a global language. And secondly, it can reproduce analogies that, according to our perception, are faithful.

Today’s digital images are still predominately simulations or kitschifications of analog images (simulations and kitschifications of “reality”). The digital image has just recently proven that its qualities are equal to those of an analog image, that it is no less colorful, sharp or dense than the chemical photograph. Thus little imagination is required to foresee the scale of the digital revolution, which is not a revolution of photography alone, but of the entire world in which we live. A digital world order is emerging, and it looks as if the analog state will be buried beneath it.

3. Projective

The digitization of the image can be interpreted as the end of photography: photography forfeits its autonomy and

the privileges derived therefrom that are cultivated in the analog state. It is caught in the digital maelstrom and then lost. It becomes indiscernible while mingling with particles from other image and sensory sources. Or, digitization can be interpreted as the perfection of photography: photography participates in the digital universality and gains new, expanded functions. If, in the analog state, it was mainly a technique of reference and a visual aid, it now becomes a technique of preference and an instrument of thought.

It is the projective aspect of image-making, and not the objective or subjective aspect, that is significant in the digital context. What in the age of analog photography could be considered a thread of light is now a beam directed into the darkness, whose pulse affords an endless holographic world. The camera as a black (reference) box is replaced by a computing projector.