

Chapter 1 : Editions of Photography: A Middle-Brow Art by Pierre Bourdieu

The everyday practice of photography by millions of amateur photographers may seem to be a spontaneous and highly personal activity. But France's leading sociologist and cultural theorist Pierre Bourdieu and his research associates show that few cultural activities are more structural and systematic.

Bourdieu readily switches from anecdote to philosophy to semiotics and back to anecdote; there is a lack of precision. His writing, intentionally or otherwise, is class based and clumsily patronising in places: He noted and tried to rationalise that photography was a pursuit of the masses. Perhaps the clue is in the title of the book from which this chapter is taken: In other writings beyond the reach of this analysis he set out how classes distinguish themselves from one another, often by having interests that are difficult for others to imitate note 1. Bourdieu discusses photographic portraiture at length, particularly that there is an aesthetic, a series of norms in the practice. This is more useful analysis, as it does help distinguish the amateur photograph that at best might be seen as art almost be accident, from a more specific attempt to use the medium as an artistic pursuit. He acknowledges that photography is not just a means of capturing reality, but is "only ever the result of an arbitrary selection. Bourdieu tackles the issue of how practitioners and viewers of the "Middlebrow Art" consider the dialectic between photography as merely reproducing interesting and beautiful objects or scenes, and as an art form. The heirarchy of legitimacies Bourdieu continues in his condescending tones towards the working classes: At one end of the spectrum are the consumer pursuits Bourdieu quotes jazz, cinema and photography as examples; at the other are works of more scholarly nature: The latter are in a "sphere of legitimacy", the former in a "sphere of the legitimizable". He identifies also the "sphere of the arbitrary" including cookery, decoration, sporting occasions. We tend to talk less these days of different classes as there is more fluidity within society but it is true that the middle classes are not seen often at Bingo or Wrestling or greyhound meets; the working classes tend not to frequent theatre or opera or art galleries. We just tend to take these things for granted; perhaps it is too difficult or not politically correct to consider them. Bourdieu tackles too the uneasy relationship photography has with the "consecrated arts". What he fails to point out is that this may change: Football is a good example as it is now de rigeur for anyone to claim support for a team, even 20 years ago it was viewed as more of a lower class sport to follow. This argument has resonance also with academic studies of media and related subjects. I mention above how intense and unintelligible parts of this text are, and set out similar thoughts in Part 1 about the writings of Althusser. There is, one feels, an academic insecurity that somehow leads to the use of obfuscatory language to explain a relatively simple concept in order to give the impression that the concept itself is more profound and important than perhaps it is.

Chapter 2 : Photography and the Hierarchy of Legitimacies | CCTP Remix and Dialogic Culture

*Photography: A Middle-Brow Art [Pierre Bourdieu] on calendrierdelascience.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. The everyday practice of photography by millions of amateur photographers may seem to be a spontaneous and highly personal activity.*

Pierre Bourdieu once dismissed photography as an art that imitates art. According to photographer and curator Claire Breukel, medium definitions are becoming more obsolete and photography is being employed in ways that transcend its traditional uses. Artists who would not describe themselves as photographers regularly produce lens-based work, often in collaboration with professional photographers. Michael Stevenson, gallery owner and art dealer, adds: Auction houses regularly fetch record prices on the back of a boom that started to register from Prints by photographers like Cindy Sherman, Andreas Gursky and Rineke Dijkstra can sell for hundreds of thousands of dollars. South Africa is obviously a different ball game. But some of our photographers have cracked the overseas market –” Zwelethu Mthethwa, Roger Ballen and David Goldblatt among them. Their work fetches prices commensurate with international success. For collectors, there is a noticeable drop from this Rthousand bracket to the next range of around Rthousand for local artists not yet on the international radar. Art dealer and gallery owner Andries Loots thinks South African photography as a whole is still highly undervalued –” partly due to a lack of exposure. She fingers the sometimes unprofessional presentation of the medium instead rather than calling photography generally undervalued. Williams says of anomalies in price between photographers: The laboratory used for processing, chemicals and exposure, are indeed all-important considerations for conservation. So what do South African photographers have to offer collectors? In a country where photography was historically welded to photojournalism, some practitioners have managed to decouple with great success; others, like Tillim, manage a successful cross-over between documentary and fine art. Dealers generally emphasise the rich subject matter. Erdmann says local photography often deals with real issues located within a South African framework rather than self-oriented work. She urges investors to be aware of pricing, authenticity and provenance when making a purchase. Breukel says photography in general is affordable to collect.

Chapter 3 : Bourdieu, Legitimacy and Photography – Graham Scambler

a contemporary look at pierre bourdieu's photography: a middle-brow art j.a. gonzalez because it is a 'choice that praises,' because it strives to capture, that is, to.

This kind of photography comes in many styles and serves many purposes – but you could group them as commercial photography ads mostly , artistic photography though, admittedly, as someone said, advertisements are the art of capitalism – and since photography and capitalism grew up together this is true on many levels and photography as surveillance police photography, journalistic photography and so on. Now, while there is nearly an endless number of remarkably interesting things that can be said about all of these kinds of photography, one of the areas that is often missed is the most popular kind of photography of all – amateur photography. This book is mostly about just that – the kind of photography that you and I might take. The first thing to know is that Bourdieu is interested in how different classes of people distinguish themselves from other classes of people. Mostly they do this by having interests that are hard for other groups to imitate. So, if you are upper class you can afford the time to become very interested in, say, classical music. You can know everything there is to know about the transition from classical to romantic music say, or the various forms of church chanting that early serious music developed out of. Having money you will be able to afford to not only buy records, but to attend concerts. This makes a huge difference. There is no record that is quite the same as a good concert performance. So, even if you have a really good sound system, a concert hall is going to be able to out-do it. Having access to this kind of environment means developing interests on what is the most fruitful and fertile possible ground. It also means getting to hear a wider variety of music than you might otherwise. They are more likely to like difficult music. This distinguishes them from other people who are probably more likely to like what might be called the light classics. And the upper classes are much more likely to have had all of the opportunities necessary to gain an appreciation of this kind of music than other classes will have had. Many of the things that they find worthwhile – serious music, serious art and so on – require real effort. Sometimes years and years of effort. No, but you are infinitely more likely to have heard of Mahler and perhaps even know some of his music if you are from the upper class than those from other classes are. What is interesting here is that the things that generally get used as a basis of social distinction are very often things with very long histories. Interesting factoid – in Australia buckets of money is spent to encourage people to learn Asian Languages Asia is our future but there are still more people in Australia who are studying Latin than there are people who are studying Chinese. And so it proves. This book comes from research Bourdieu did in France on who actually takes photographs and what do they take photographs of. What he found was that it was much more likely that you would take photographs if you were a clerk than if you were a senior executive. In fact, if you were from the upper class you were likely to see photography as a bit vulgar. Oddly enough, you would also tend to be more likely to see the artistic merits of photography too – lower classes tending to see mostly the technical aspects of photography – but distinction would be much more likely to come to you as someone from the upper class via drawing or painting than from photography. This helps to explain the subtitle of this book – a middle-brow art. The thing is that photography is seen by almost everyone as being kind of easy. The world is out there – you stick a camera in front of the world and press down on a little button and, well, no matter who does the pressing you get pretty much the same photograph. Not much room for distinction. Bourdieu also found that the most frequent kinds of photographs that were taken were family shots. And mostly these were taken as a means of group formation. In Australia the two big ceremonies are probably when a person turns 21 and their wedding. Now, guess which of these two that you are most likely to hire a professional photographer to record. Why is it so obvious that the wedding is going to be the one? The point is that a wedding is really about two groups, two families, coming together to make one group – as symbolised

by the couple. And this group formation needs to be documented. This symbolic joining of the groups is made most clear with the birth of the first child ever wondered why there are so many photos of the first child in the family and so few of any of the next ones? One of the normal things you take photographs of is your kids. This is because it is important for group formation that this is reinforced and you do that by sending grandparents and god parents and so on photos of little Johnny. Another thing that is important to take photographs of is your holidays. Bourdieu says somewhere that a holiday needs to be photographed for it to be real. What is really interesting here is that what must be photographed ends up being a very limited number of things and most of these things are defined by group formation. Well, the interesting thing here is that these people tend to be people without families – more specifically, adolescent males. As Bourdieu points out, as soon as these people get into a relationship they generally stop mucking around with photography. But if they do continue they tend not to be the ones who take family photos. All a bit like the difference between tourists and travellers. The thing about photography, though, is that being a photographer looks – from the outside at least – like a pretty good life. But professional photography does look like a way into the middle class – it is a well paying profession if you can get a start. And what Bourdieu found was that the kinds of people who did get a start tended to be from the upper classes. They had the contacts to take photographs of people most likely able to pay. But for the middle classes – as Bourdieu mentions, the clerical workers and so on – being an amateur photographer might just let you have a life of independence. The chances may not be high, but they are high enough to tantalize. The problem with Bourdieu is that he starts hard. The three moments of the scientific process are therefore inseparable: Still, if you are going to read this skip ahead a little way until he starts talking about weddings. The writing becomes much more clear and the ideas incredibly interesting. One might say of photography what Hegel said of philosophy: In the case of the wedding, the picture that captures for eternity the group that has been brought together, or rather the bringing together of two groups, is necessarily implied within a ritual whose function is to consecrate, that is, to sanction and to sanctify the union of two groups effected through the union of two individuals. Today the hierarchy is reversed. Page 23 Nothing may be photographed apart from that which must be photographed. Page 30 The family album expresses the essence of social memory. Page 30 The tourist of outsider can cause astonishment by photographing everyday objects or local people at their habitual occupations. Page 40 – thus the rate of participation in camera clubs drops sharply after marriage. Page 41 The chosen and deliberate refusal of photography reaches a peak among the most senior executives and professionals, as well as among craftsmen and shopkeepers, while, on the other hand, the intention to take photographs is particularly strong among manual workers, junior executives and, especially, clerical workers. Page 42 Likewise, it is the implicit definition of the quality of the practice that determines the type of equipment which each class holds to be necessary: Page 44 In fact, photographic practice is distinguished both from practices which are expensive but require no intellectual training such as tourism and practices which are economically accessible but only to those who have had the necessary training such as going to museums. Page 47 – the members of the upper classes are shown to be both more predisposed than others to grant photography aesthetic value as such, and less inclined to accord it value as an activity. Page 83 Photographs are certainly taken just as much – if not more – in order to be shown as in order to be looked at. Page 88 Photography, far from being perceived as signifying itself and nothing else, is always examined as a sign of something that it is not. The legibility of the picture itself is a function of the legibility of its intention. Page 92 It is no accident that passionate photographers are always obliged to develop the aesthetic theory of their practice, to justify their existence as photographers by justifying the existence of photography as a true art. Page 98 While the profession recruits a large number of its members from subjects of middle class origin, for whom it represents a profession more or less equal to that of their class of origin, it is especially characterised by the high proportion of subjects of upper class origin. Page Photography assures those who engage in it, if not of upclassing, then at least of the hope and promise of upclassing. Page Because photography is more capable than the theatre of providing a living, it tends to attract boys, while the theatre attracts girls.

Home; eBooks; Photography; Photography: A Middle-Brow Art - Pierre Bourdieu; VIP.

Chapter 5 : A middle-brow art? - Art Africa

Editions for Photography: A Middle-Brow Art: (Paperback published in), (Paperback published in), (Paperback published in).

Chapter 6 : Photography: A Middle-brow Art: calendrierdelascience.com: Pierre Bourdieu: Books

The everyday practice of photography by millions of amateur photographers - the family snapshots, the holiday prints, the wedding portraits - may seem to be a spontaneous and highly personal activity.

Chapter 7 : Understanding Visual Culture: The social definition of photography by Pierre Bourdieu

The everyday practice of photography by millions of amateur photographers - the family snapshots, the holiday prints, the wedding portraits - may seem to be a spontaneous and highly personal activity. But Bourdieu and his associates show that few cultural activities are more structured and.

Chapter 8 : Photography : Pierre Bourdieu :

Emily Rothkopf. Photography as an art form was discredited as "middle-brow" by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, following the commercial success of portable cameras in the 's and 60's and subsequent adoption by middle-class families as a means to document domestic events (Bourdieu).

Chapter 9 : Photography: A Middle-Brow Art by Pierre Bourdieu

Pierre Bourdieu once dismissed photography as an art that imitates art. BUT IT'S ALSO COLLECTABLE, WRITES Kim Gurney. One of the consequences of the ongoing erosion of boundaries between contemporary art mediums is the application of photography in new ways.