

In today's society  
photography plays an  
important role media  
essay



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In today's society, photography plays an important role to our visual minds and it has always been considered to have a special status for truthfully recording the world and making people perceive photographs as something real. ("...all these kind of pictures are capable of capturing and conveying to our eyes the distinctive features that our brains need in order to be able to figure out what we are looking at) "(p. 151, persuasion in the media age, timothy a Borchers). Photography has been developed from television, films, eye-catching magazines and the world-wide web which make up the mass media.

Bill Niffenegger, known for his computer graphics and for speaking about photography special effects, claims that people nowadays who use media should be aware of the fact that almost everything they see is naive, whether it's a commercial, a film, a newspaper, a photograph: " It's like going online in a chat room. There will always be 300-pound hairy guys calling themselves ' Mary'. We just have to grow up"(DeMocker, 1998: HREF). This statement rises up the following question: is what we see in these images, always the truth? " The wildlife photography we see in films, books, and periodicals is often stunning in its design, import, and aesthetics. It may also be fake, enhanced or manufactured by emerging digital technologies that have transformed-some say contaminated-the photography landscape" (KENMTII BROWER, Atlantic Monthly Co., 1998).

Control skillfully, exerting shrewd or devious influence? This could be the words that make up the definition for this imposing word, " manipulation". But when this term comes in contact with Mass Media, then it shapes into digital manipulation (fa legatura cu digital, grotesc, tehnologie, manipulare).  
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Photo manipulation is the process that alters photos, aesthetically improving the picture or changing the content of a picture, in order to create a unique image which can provoke illusion or deception. Nowadays technology has advanced so much that anyone having a computer and an image-manipulation software can digitally retouch pictures which can create a visual impact, deceive, influence or offer benefits. Manipulating photographs is nothing new, however and we have got the opportunity to see digital manipulation of images everywhere like in the news, advertising, music and film culture etc: “ All images that appear in the press are manipulated in one way, shape, or form, whether they're by choice- by that image being chosen over another – or by cropping, or by digital manipulation. You're being manipulated a thousand different ways, and as long as you are somewhat aware of the fact, then there's not so much to be afraid of. But if you think that what you're seeing is the truth, then you're in for big trouble(David Byrne, 1994)” (dezvolta in ce domenii se fol photo manipulation; ajungi cumva la subiect-efectul in beauty industry)

In fact, photos have been retouched long before the invention of imaging software. The year 1980 was the moment when news photography went digital and the digital imaging technology started. Historically, photographic images have been considered to offer a truthful visual representation of the world having attributed sentences like: “ Photographs don't lie”, “ A picture is worth a thousand words” and “ Seeing is believing”. Moreover, in the judiciary system got to be called “ The silent Witness” and “ courtrooms have admired photographs as evidence without collateral testimony to incriminate or prove someone's innocence “(Guilshan, 1992: 368)

It is announced on some way or another the death of the photographic image and that “ the ethical or factual problem of computer alteration arises with the greatest urgency” (Ritchin, 1990: 29). William J Mitchell who investigates about visual truth in the post-photographic era, in his book *The Reconfigured Eye* claims that “ From the moment of its sesquicentennial in 1989 photography was dead – or, more precisely, radically and permanently displaced – as was painting 150 years ago” (Mitchell, 1992: 20).

“ If photography is to be discussed on a serious level, it must be described in relation to death. It's true that a photograph is a witness, but a witness of something that is no more. Even if the person in the picture is still alive, it's a moment of this subject's existence that was photographed, and this moment is gone. This is an enormous trauma for humanity, a trauma endlessly renewed. Each reading of a photo and there are billions worldwide in a day, each perception and reading of a photo is implicitly, in a repressed manner, a contract which what has ceased to exist, a contract with death” (Barthes, 1985: 356).

Nowadays, in media the use of photo manipulation has been developed more and more, but there is one domain where it has had been showing its negative influences. The image of beauty presented today to women in advertisements and photographs, in media, especially in magazines, put them in the position where they engage in the comparison between themselves and the ideal that they perceive to be real, but in fact is digitally manipulated: “ The digitized picture has broken the relationship between picture and reality once and for all. We are entering an era when no one will be able to say whether a picture is true or false. They are all becoming

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beautiful and extraordinary and with each passing day they belong increasingly to the World of advertising. Their beauty, like their truth is slipping away from us. Soon they will really end up making us blind". ( Wim Wenders pag 87)

The fact that fashion and beauty industry promote the idea of perfection and standards of beauty that are impossible to achieve offers the digital manipulation an important status and is to be considered an important tool for the success in selling of fashion and entertainment magazines. The present problem.....

Digital manipulation is the foundation of the fashion and beauty industry, where air-brushed and digitally enhanced portrayals of ideal male and female beauty promote standards of attractiveness that are impossible to achieve.

Cap. II Photoshop etc

Nowadays, there are a wide range of pieces of software used by photographers to enhance their work, but the most commonly used in retouching photos is the digital artifice called Adobe Photoshop. According to Gordon Baldwin retouching can be defined as " the careful manual alteration of the appearance of a print or negative" that is " most often used in portraiture to make cosmetic improvement to a sitter's appearance, such as removing minor facial blemishes, softening outlines or wrinkles, or ' powdering' shining noses" (Baldwin, 1991: 74). Even if Adobe promotes its Photoshop software in an innocent way: " Create, paint, correct, and retouch with the ' camera for your mind', the various techniques this software uses, <https://assignbuster.com/in-todays-society-photography-plays-an-important-role-media-essay/>

could control and modify appearances in the most dramatic way: "Clean up complexion, soften eye lines, soften smile line, add color to lips, trim chin, remove neck lines, soften line under ear lobe, add highlights to earrings, add blush to cheeks, clean up neck line, remove stray hair, remove hair strands on dress, adjust color and add hair on top of head, add dress on side to create better line, add dress on shoulder, clean up and smooth dress folds under arm and create one seam on image on right side." (Esquire magazine, 1990)

One of the most popular tools used in Adobe Photoshop is cloning. There is object cloning and color cloning and another one is reverse cropping.

(dezvolta.....)

Jean Baudrillard defines in his book *Simulacra and Simulation* that there are different kinds of image manipulation, from the point where the image "it is the reflection of a profound reality" to the point where the image "it is its own pure simulacrum". There is the first kind of manipulation called "cosmetic manipulation" where only some basic retouching (like??) is being made ("it masks and denatures a profound reality"), the one where the reality is almost completely hidden ("it masks the absence of a profound reality"), the stage when "it has no relation to any reality whatsoever" and until "it is its own pure simulacrum". (Baudrillard, 1994: 6)

Programs like Adobe Photoshop contain digital filters that are used in image enhancement, transformation or correction of the image. It can control the texture, the granularity, sharpness or softness, the contrast, the tonality and color balance of the image. This process could be applied to the whole image

or just to some parts of it thanks to the cropping technique.(in *The reconfigured eye: visual truth in the...by willian john Mitchell. Pag 86*). There is one filter which is the most used in digital manipulations to darken or to lighten an image, to enhance or reduce its contrast.

In the first category of manipulation Baudrillard mentions about (Baudrillard, 1994: 6), retouchers include the erasing of wrinkles, blemishes, scars and flaws: “ toning down or removing anything unattractive, like wrinkles, which may have been reproduced with too great accuracy” (in Gernsheim 1969: 466). These things are possible through the facilities that Adobe Photoshop provides in order to manipulate a picture for an established purpose. There are many ways of doing the same thing, but using different tools. For example same effect of removing wrinkles could be obtained either by using the cloning stamp tool, the spot healing brush tool or the smudge tool. Miracles could be obtained just by using a brush: “ the brush may be considered the instrument of softness, the palette knife of crispness and sharpness”(Sir Charles Eastlake in *The reconfigured Eye*)