

European Photography: Reply to questions concerning the future of photography.

The possibilities inherent in photo techniques are beginning to become exhausted and presumably nothing much will change with the present tendencies toward ever more automated, inexpensive and smaller cameras, ever more exact and "prittier" pictures, ever more faithful copies, and ever more accurate reproductions on secondary media like print, microfiche etc. In Kun's terms: the present paradigm of the photographic universe is approaching perfection and we may be looking forward to a revolution.

That revolution is in fact already in the making. The techniques of photography are in the process of moving from chemical to electromagnetic processes. By this, they will give up the technical perfection they have achieved, and they will become much more experimental. Like at the time of its invention, photography will again become botchy. Those who are interested in perfection, in making "masterpieces", will be the only ones to continue and make use of the techniques now being exhausted. All the others, those who do not think, and feel, and appreciate, and act "classically", will welcome the challenges proposed by the new techniques, and they will incite them to become creative.

Two among those new challenges should be stressed: the introduction of computers into the photographic process; and the fact that the receivers of the photographs will be in a position to manipulate them. These two innovations will by themselves change photography in such a radical way that it may have to be named by a new term in the future. And there is a third novelty to be considered. The images produced with the new techniques will no longer be materially manifest, but they will appear on screens. This emigration of theirs from a material support into the electromagnetic field will have them lose their "objective" character, and they will become "pure information". Thus they will no longer belong to the cultural context of works, (which are modifications of the objective world), and they will become part and parcel of the emerging culture of pure information.

A metaphore taken from biology may help to grasp this revolution: In the first half of the 19th century, a mutation came about within the realm of images, and photography was that mutant. This new species had quite a number of off-spring like movies, TV, video and computer-synthetized image. Those off-springs of photographs began to interbreed and gave rise to a new species, which is about to break its shell: the new electro-magnetic photo. It is ourselves who incubated this new creature, and it is up to us to have it leave its nest and become capable of living on its own.