Mapping the Cultural Landscape:
A Rephotographic Survey of W. Eugene Smith’s Pittsburgh Project

A dissertation presented to
the faculty of
the College of Fine Arts of Ohio University
In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

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May 2015
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This dissertation titled

Mapping the Cultural Landscape:

A Rephotographic Survey of W. Eugene Smith’s *Pittsburgh Project*

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ABSTRACT

CONBOY, MATTHEW L., Ph.D., May 2015, Interdisciplinary Arts

Mapping the Cultural Landscape: A Rephotographic Survey of W. Eugene Smith’s

*Pittsburgh Project*

Director of Dissertation: Marina L. Peterson

In this dissertation, I will apply the scholarly, creative, and descriptive traits of rephotography to document the city of Pittsburgh’s cultural landscape. Starting with images of W. Eugene Smith’s *Pittsburgh Project* as my exemplar, I will conduct my own rephotographic survey and identify changes in the cultural landscape of Pittsburgh between 1955 and 2014. I will also continue and contribute to the transdisciplinary nature of rephotography by viewing Smith’s project and my rephotography through the lenses of tourism, palimpsest, and performance. Used individually, these three lenses provide a better understanding of rephotography—used together in concert; they create a conceptual framework for the uses and study of rephotography in the future. My receptiveness to the relationship between these three topics to photography and rephotography will promote approaches to the study of photography that expand surveys pertaining to the photo-mechanical nature, subject matter, or formalist properties of the medium.

The Pittsburgh scenes including birds-eye views of the city, individual buildings, and even street signs provide a broad overview of the city on both a macro and a micro-scale. Through more than twenty examples, I suggest that photography as utilized by Smith, exposes Pittsburgh as seen by an outsider, while rephotography reveals Pittsburgh
as insiders have transformed it. The themes of tourism, palimpsest, and performance organize my study of rephotography and situate my rephotographic survey in terms of Smith’s *Pittsburgh Project*. They are the threads that connect the photographer Smith, rephotography as methodology and subject, and my own survey of Pittsburgh’s cultural landscape together.
Dedication

To Heather Pinson, my partner in life without whom this dissertation would have never left my computer’s hard drive
Acknowledgments

The development and completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the support and contribution of many individuals. In particular, I would like to thank committee members Marina Peterson, Jennie Klein, William Condee, and Tim Anderson. Marina and Jennie were absolutely instrumental in the conceptual and editorial process and assisted me at every step in this project. Similarly, William and Tim provided me with many sources pertaining to geography, cultural landscape studies, and Appalachia.

The Carnegie Museum of Art, the Center for Creative Photography, and the National Archives were all important and invaluable stops for me during my years of research and writing. In addition, the Framing Time & Place conference at the University of Plymouth prompted me to formulate my themes regarding rephotography and afforded me the opportunity to talk with and interview Mark Klett.

I would also like to thank current and past members of the Interdisciplinary Arts faculty including Charles Buchanan, Vladamir Marchenkov, Ginny Gorlinski, Keith Harris, and Dora Wilson for their guidance and assistance during both of my National Guard mobilizations and my move to Pittsburgh. I am also grateful to my colleagues in the School of Interdisciplinary Arts including Övgü Gökçe, Chris Koch, Taik Lim, Steve Rybin, Sung Chul-Oh, Adam Gustafson, Carissa Massey, Jason Hartz, and Henry MacCarthy for the great conversations we had every Thursday at Casa after our Interdisciplinary Arts seminars.
I would especially like to thank Robert Hobbs at Virginia Commonwealth University for first planting the seed in my head that I could pursue a PhD in the arts and for introducing the Mattress Factory to me. Without his prompting, I would have never visited the Carnegie Museum of Art’s *Dream Street* exhibit or fallen for Pittsburgh.

My family including Richard, Ronnie, Pat, Ernie, Brenda, and Eddie, all had the rare gift of knowing exactly what to say to me at all stages of this dissertation. Having been through this process before, their advice and support got me through this degree.

Finally, I owe a debt of gratitude to my partner Heather Pinson. Her encouragement, editing, and suggestions made this dissertation what it is today. She was never too busy to take a look at my writing or ideas and all she asked for in return was another cup of hot tea. Most importantly, she never once doubted my ability to finish this dissertation.
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Introduction:

Mapping the Cultural Landscape:

A Rephotographic Survey of W. Eugene Smith’s Pittsburgh Project

A personal interpretation…Pittsburgh, like any city, is a turbulent debate, teeming evolution within the equilibriums of paradox. A living, carnal entity, it bears as the proof of its heartbeat every vice and virtue, all the swarming humors of man. Even in its most persistent clichés a city is composed beyond count of unpredictable fragments, and these compel a fidelity of vision that lances far beneath and beyond the hollow tag-line identifications—“The Hearth of the Nation,” “The Arsenal of Democracy,” “The Smoky City”—that are often wrought to fit them. To portray a city is beyond ending; to begin such an effort is itself a grave conceit. For though the portrayal may achieve its own measure of truth, it will still be no more than a rumor of the city, as meaningful, and as permanent.1

Between 1955 and 1958, photographer W. Eugene Smith chronicled the beginning of Pittsburgh’s first “renaissance” as it transitioned from smoke and soot-filled skies toward a post-industrial existence.2 Fifty years later, I will demonstrate the

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2 Pittsburgh has been subject to three different “renaissances.” The first lasted from 1946-1973 and resulted in the most dramatic changes to the urban and cultural landscape of Pittsburgh. The second Renaissance went from the late 1970s to the early 1990s and was marked by architectural landmarks downtown. Finally, Renaissance III began in the late 1990s and continues to this day. This period has been marked by adaptive reuse of former industrial sights and a reclaiming of land that borders the three rivers.
scholarly, creative, and descriptive nature of rephotography as I use my own rephotographic survey of Smith’s photo-biography of Pittsburgh as a tool for mapping urban spaces and as subject, methodology, and evidence for a dissertation that explores the status and place of photography as a cartographic tool in the cultural landscape. In its simplest form, rephotography, coined in the late 1970s by Mark Klett, is the act of creating a “then and now” image from a previous photographer. In order to investigate the cultural and cartographic status of photography, thousands of pages of Smith’s photographs, notes, and contact sheets were used as an ad hoc “map.” At face value, rephotography provides a glimpse into Pittsburgh’s cultural landscape and how it has been altered over the fifty years since Smith first arrived in the city. Yet as I will discuss here, photography is never a transparent lens, and a cultural landscape is not an objective terrain open for direct representation.

Cultural landscape studies became a legitimate academic pursuit with the publication of the first issue of Landscape: Human Geography of the Southwest by J.B. Jackson in 1951. Written in a literary and descriptive style that eschewed footnotes and unnecessary jargon, cultural landscape studies has now influenced four generations of scholars from fields as diverse as geography, history, sociology, economics, and urban

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3 The terms “map” and “mapping” are used in an abstract sense throughout this dissertation. Their definitions extend beyond the one most commonly used in geography: the rendering of a three-dimensional landscape in two-dimensions. Instead, mapping is used in a conceptual sense in that it frames my ordering and categorizing of Smith’s photographs and my rephotographs in order to connect them through space and time.

4 In an interview conducted by Jarin Breuer and published in After the Ruins, 1906 and 2006: Rephotographing the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire, Mark Klett stated that along with his collaborators, he “might have coined the term “rephotography,” but we certainly didn’t invent the genre.”
planning even though he left as editor in 1968. It is precisely this transdisciplinarity that both reveals and clouds the definition and study of the cultural landscape.

Today, the study of the cultural landscape isn’t so much an independent academic discipline as it is an aid to other fields of study. Landscape is the space where culture meets and shapes nature, and it is this inclusiveness that enables cultural landscape studies to integrate itself into any number of disparate fields without establishing a hierarchy of disciplines. Particularly within the scope of Tourism Studies, the subject of a chapter in my dissertation and a field of research that did not even exist in 1951, cultural landscape studies encourages new questions to be asked about patterns of movement, routes covered by tourists, and the abundance or dearth of visitors to particular locations. Cultural landscape studies also asks questions pertaining to the who, what, and why of photography and its subjects that may be ignored by other methodologies. So too are cartography and mapping explored as questions pertaining to methodology and politics influence the outwardly scientific depiction of the land. At its core, then, cultural landscape studies is the force that drives the critique of the existence and formation of the landscape.

The definitions of **landscape** and **cultural landscape** have been modified and revised over the intervening fifty years as new academic interests integrated cultural landscape studies into their own practices. Both Jackson and W.G. Hoskins, a scholar working concurrently in England, referred early on in their careers to the landscape in a metaphorical sense in which we need not only “to learn to read it”\(^5\) but also “know how

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to read it.” As time progressed, Jackson took a more critical approach to defining landscape and eventually recognized that it is both topographical (marked by natural features) and cultural (marked by human intervention). A generation later in 1979, Pierce Lewis treated landscape as a verb instead of a noun (a book that must be read), which transformed it into an act that is responsible for everything from “city skylines to farmers’ silos, from golf courses to garbage dumps, […]” For Lewis, the cultural landscape then becomes “nearly everything that we see when we go outdoors.” In the same collection of essays, Yi-Fu Tuan fully recognized the elusive nature of landscape and described it as a “construct of the mind and of feeling.” Finally, one more generation removed from Jackson, Paul Groth in 1997 expanded the definition to look at how cultural landscape studies “focus[es] most on the history of how people have used everyday space—buildings, rooms, streets, fields, or yards—to establish their identity, articulate their social relations, and derive cultural meaning.” As defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the cultural landscape is an “organically evolved landscape” or “a landscape designed and created intentionally by

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8 Ibid 12.


 Cultural landscape is also used to describe the agency of culture as a force in shaping the land. From Carl O. Sauer, “the cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, [and] the cultural landscape is the result.”  

Drawing on recent work in geography and art, I take cartography and mapping to refer to the subjective art of depicting themes and concepts shared by the act of moving through and documenting urban places and spaces. Smith’s photography and this rephotography serve as street-level maps documenting the subtle and not so subtle changes in the cultural landscape of Pittsburgh. Within the scope of this dissertation, I examine Smith’s original travels around Pittsburgh on foot and in automobile and retrace his movements through individual photographs, contact sheets, maps, and detailed journal entries.

Of particular interest for me, I have looked at the treatment of photography in various cultural landscape studies texts. Richard Francaviglia relied heavily on street (eye) level photography in order to look at the relationships that elements of Main Streets

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13 Martin Dodge, Rob Kitchin and Chris Perkins have collaborated to edit two books on contemporary cartography including the use of photography since 2009. In addition, Joan Schwartz and James Ryan have edited a book that brings together the concepts of photography and place in order to create a scholarly approach to combining the social sciences, photography, and geography. Finally, Katherine Harmon has has written on contemporary artists employing maps to create art.

14 The journals can be found at his archives at the Center for Creative Photography. The detailed entries are dated and provide a shooting script that assisted me in piecing together his movements.
and mining regions had to one another because we experience the landscape by walking (or driving) through it. At the opposite extreme, Jackson began his career lobbying for birds-eye views of the Western landscape in order to see man’s shaping of the land on a macro scale but gradually turned to ground and street level images. While aerial images undoubtedly show the relationships between natural and man-made features, the results can often turn into abstract diagrams divorced from the lands, towns, and cities we inhabit. Rephotography presents a means by which the landscape can be (re)presented, investigated, and explored. Through the retracing of a former photographer’s footsteps, a rephotographer attempts to frame a scene exactly as it was photographed in the past. It also participates in the creation of a new meaning for the very landscapes it depicts. For Pittsburgh, that means the remodeling of industrial landscapes to serve an economy based on service, medical, and academic industries. It also means creating visualizations of the impact of the decisions made in the back rooms of city hall and how those impacted the fabric of the city. Rephotography, in conjunction with its source document, condenses time and space in order to produce a hybrid artifact—an image that is at once both here and there and now and then.

This dissertation incorporates rephotography as a cartographic tool and explores its relationship with mapping. Within the last few years, museums and galleries have brought mapping into their spaces with “Experimental Geography: Radical Approaches to Landscape, Cartography, and Urbanism” organized by Nato Thompson and Independent Curators International in 2008, “Cartographic Imagination/An Atlas” at San Francisco State University in 2009, “Mapping and Art in the Americas,” a National
Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Summer Institute held at the Newberry Library in Chicago in 2010, and Trevor Paglen’s untitled solo exhibition at the Metro Pictures Gallery in New York City in 2013. In 2012, the NEH once again sponsored two summer institutes on digital mapping and cartography taking place at UCLA “Digital Cultural Mapping” and at the Virtual Center for Spatial Humanities at Indiana University “Spatial Narrative and Deep Maps: Explorations in the Spatial Humanities.” Finally, in 2014, UNIDEE hosted a residency and workshop under the direction of Sofia Olascoaga (another Independent Curators International fellow) that explored mapping collective memories.

Rephotography brings the potential to add a temporal dimension to cartography whether through animations or static layering. When paired, photographs and rephotographs participate in a dialogue to depict the past and present concurrently. Rephotography is the first step in drawing together Smith’s photographs, the cultural landscape of Pittsburgh, and mapping.

What rephotography presents is the means by which the landscape can be (re)presented, investigated, and explored. Through the retracing of a former photographer’s footsteps, a rephotographer attempts to frame a scene exactly as it was photographed in the past. It also participates in the creation of a new meaning for the very landscapes it depicts. For Pittsburgh, that means the remodeling of industrial landscapes to serve an economy based on service, medical, and academic industries. It also means creating visualizations of the impact of the decisions made in the back rooms of city hall and how those impacted the fabric of the city. Rephotography, in conjunction
with its source document, condenses time and space in order to produce a hybrid artifact—an image that is at once both here and there and now and then.

The importance of completing a rephotographic survey such as this is three-fold. First, my pictorial survey and written study opens W. Eugene Smith’s seminal project, and the city of Pittsburgh, itself, to reinterpretation and critical study. As such, it presents facets of Pittsburgh as a living organism that are not immediately visible to the untrained eye. Second, this dissertation addresses the question of the status of rephotography and its relationship not only to documentary photography but other modes of photography as well. The debate over the place that rephotography occupies in the contemporary conceptual mode of postmodern art (as a performative statement) includes at least five different genres of photography including documentary, photojournalism, landscape, fine art and conceptual. Finally, rephotography is examined through the structure of three themes (Tourism, Palimpsest, and Performance) that define the uniqueness of rephotography and help separate it from other forms of image making. If taken alone, each theme could be used to investigate photography, but when used in concert with one another, they present a rational and functional theory for the study of rephotographs.

Although this dissertation contains pairs of photographic images, these should be understood as operating more like traditional case studies as opposed to fine art photographs in a thesis. Even as my rephotographs are intimately tied to my practice of creating art, they are equally entwined with my writing and theorizing. In the same way that a dissertation on a photographer’s body of work would seem incomplete without visual evidence, so too would this examination of Smith’s Pittsburgh Project, only in this
case, it is my own images that populate my dissertation. In addition, they contribute to the ever-changing archive of images that attest to the changes that have occurred in Pittsburgh and its environs over the past fifty years.

The majority of my interviews and archival research were conducted in the spring and summer of 2009 in Plymouth, England; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Washington, DC; and Tucson, Arizona. In Plymouth I first presented my theories of rephotography and interviewed Mark Klett whose interview I include in Appendix B. The preliminary photographic studies were begun in the summer of 2008, while the final images were taken during the winter, spring, and summer of 2008-2009 and again from 2013-2014. The timing was required because I tried to match the seasons and time of my photographs as closely as I could with those of Smith, particularly in terms of foliage and its growth in the intervening fifty years. One shot in particular that appeared in Lorant’s book but not in any other format was a scene from a dorm for priests at Duquesne University in which a tree that was still a sapling in 1956 had entirely blocked my view in 2008. Also, on more than one occasion, Smith documented public workers planting samplings downtown at the Mellon Square parking garage and near scenic overlooks on Mt. Washington. The final editing and printing of the images began during the spring of summer of 2009.

When I started rephotographing the *Pittsburgh Project*, I had a sense of the possible outcome, but I was not prepared for some of the discoveries that I would make while conducting my survey.\(^{15}\) Originally, I believed that because I was rephotographing, 

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\(^{15}\) This project has assumed several presentation formats and incorporated various media since I began this survey in 2008. Of particular importance, during 2008-2009, I participated in
I was acting in a straight documentary manner. It did not take long to realize, however, that despite my initial preconceptions, I was nonetheless creating an entirely new set of images despite their reliance on Smith’s. Although I was aware that I would be reoccupying the same space that Smith had first inhabited, I soon became conscious of the fact that I was also recreating a performance first conducted by Smith. In so doing, I was acutely aware of not only “where” but also “how” I moved through the city. This sense of performativity pervaded my work, encouraged me to reconsider some of the prejudices I had prior to the start of this project, and took this project down different paths than I could have imagined.

The Pittsburgh Project and Rephotography

W. Eugene Smith (1918-1978) was a prolific photographer and the author of a number of famous photo essays for *Life* including “Country Doctor” (1948), “Spanish Village” (1950), and “A Man of Mercy” (1954). His *Pittsburgh Project* (conducted primarily between 1955-56) was no exception. Smith’s photographic essay was originally planned to be a three-week assignment to produce 100 photographs for Stefan Lorant’s *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City*—a book planned to celebrate Pittsburgh’s bicentennial in 1958. However, it turned into a multi-year struggle to
photograph and capture Pittsburgh and a lifetime to publish. Composed of almost 18,000 negatives (spread over close to 800 contact sheets), 6,000 work prints, and 1,200 finished master prints, this project would have been a daunting task for any editor to organize and proved impossible for Smith to form into a cohesive essay. Today, the images from this project reside in the archives of the Library of Congress (LOC, 756 contact sheets), the Carnegie Museum of Art (CMOA, 539 work prints), and the Center for Creative Photography (CCP, more than 20 linear feet of archives and 534 prints). These archives were relatively unexplored and unseen until 2001 when the CMOA in conjunction with the CCP and the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University curated a travelling exhibition of his Pittsburgh photographs entitled Dream Street: W. Eugene Smith’s Pittsburgh Project, which travelled around the country from 2001 until 2003.

Like Smith, who had just entered into a contract with Magnum Photos after resigning from Life magazine, Pittsburgh was also at a crossroads during the 1940s and 1950s. Beginning with the environmental protection measures enabled by the Smoke Control Ordinance of 1941, the urban interventions formally commenced with Renaissance I (1946-1973) followed by Renaissance II (1980’s) and Renaissance III.

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16 After returning to New York, Smith commenced his Jazz Loft Project, which focused on the artists, both visual and musical, that passed through his living and workspace in the flower district of Manhattan. Between 1957 and 1965, Smith recorded more than 3000 hours of audio on reel-to-reel tapes. This included ambient sounds, telephone conversations, television shows, and impromptu jazz jam sessions featuring the likes of Thelonius Monk, Zoot Sims, and Ronnie Free. At the same time, he had a side project, “As from my window, I sometimes glance,” in which he photographed street scenes from a broken window. Photographing the range of activities and people that traversed Sixth Ave. made him acutely aware of the role that time plays in the life of a city. He traced the changes that occur on a daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly basis until the casual viewer has recollection of what came before. All the while, Smith produced a record of this one street in silver gelatin that is the modern day equivalent of medieval copyists and their parchment manuscripts—images and pages that have multiple layers of meaning condensed into one document.
(2009-present). The areas of the city most visibly affected by these initiatives were the
downtown Golden Triangle district, the North Side, and the physical infrastructure
connecting the city to the surrounding interstates. Each marked the city in ways that were
particular to the issues faced during each phase including the wholesale razing of
hundreds of blocks worth of homes, businesses, and cultural assets. In particular, more
than one hundred acres were razed in the Lower Hill District and North Side during the
urban redevelopment of the 1950s and 1960s to create room for sporting facilities and
interstate highways. Simultaneously, Pittsburgh was entering a four-decade period when
it would lose more than half of its population as every local steel mill closed its doors.
Numerous places portrayed in Smith’s work might be unrecognizable or even exist for
visitors to Pittsburgh today, while other scenes remain eerily similar fifty years later,
including the parking garage under Mellon Square, the steps rising from Melrose Ave. to
Chautauqua Street, Strawberry Way, and Loyal Way. The juxtaposition of scenes
displaying change and stasis is part of what makes my rephotographic study of W.
Eugene Smith’s work beneficial to the study of Pittsburgh as an urban organism and as a
model for other rephotographic studies.

Pittsburgh is a natural choice as a subject for a rephotographic survey because it is
a thoroughly postindustrial city—it staked its claim as a center of industry, used those
proceeds to fund a vast cultural cachet, lost the steel and coal mining industries, and then
reinvented itself as a global leader in higher education, technology, and health care. I
will use photography to conceptualize the urban landscape as a fluid medium through
which social, economic, political, and cultural forces interact by employing the analysis
of a rephotographic survey as a methodology. During this investigation, the photographs (both Smith’s and my own) will be viewed through a cartographic lens in which photography will be treated as a form of mapping unto itself. I will incorporate theoretical concerns based on three sets of themes and photographic examples: tourism studies with photographs obtained from tourist vantage points and from the footsteps of photographers who came before him, the palimpsest with images of the Polish Army War Veterans Home and Breed Street, and the physical performance of photography to include images taken from Sixth Ave. and Arlington Ave. In so doing, I explore how photography links cultural geography, culture, and the landscape with tourism studies, the concept of the palimpsest, and performance.

Prior Studies

The writings of Gillian Rose, Don Mitchell, and Denis Cosgrove are critical for formulating a methodology that links cultural geography and photography. In both “On the Need to Ask How, Exactly, Is Geography ‘Visual’?” and “Practising Photography: An Archive, a Study, some Photographs and a Researcher,” Rose questioned accepted practices by researchers and geographers with regard to photography in terms of the landscape and the archive. Treating both the landscape and the archive as contested spaces, she introduces economic, political, and cultural concerns governing the creation, distribution, archiving, and reading of photographic images. Borrowing from Barthes, she first assumes that a photograph’s meaning is governed by how it is used, but then delves into the relationship that historical geographers have with the photographs they study. Written from the perspective of a researcher and historical geographer working in
an archive, she recognizes the complex relationship that photography has with its referent in that “the recovery of the historical past can only be managed in relation to a particular contemporary present,” even as the archive threatens to negate a photograph’s meaning by removing it from its context.\(^{17}\)

As important as the primary source material from W. Eugene Smith’s *Pittsburgh Project* portfolio and Mark Klett’s *Second View* and *Third Views* books to the field of rephotography remain, this investigation into changes within the cultural landscape of Pittsburgh draws on the work of cultural geographers and radical cartographers. Beginning in the 1980s, these scholars, who include Henri Lefebvre, Richard Peet, Denis Cosgrove, and Peter Jackson, legitimized the use of unique methods for exploring the connection between the landscape (both natural and manmade) and culture (as composed by creative, political, economic, and social variables). They also posed the questions regarding the city as a stage ripe for performance that led me directly to the themes of tourism, palimpsest, and performance I employed in this dissertation.

Then, in the early 1990s, geographers Denis Wood, John Fels, and Don Mitchell began to question the language, creation, and syntax of maps and how we use them to shape our view of the world. Wood and Fels refined an understanding of maps as a series of arguments rather than a presentation of reality. Maps thus become, much like culture, a series of propositions through which political, social, and economic issues play out.

\(^{17}\) Gillian Rose, “Practising Photography: An Archive, a Study, some Photographs and a Researcher.” *Journal of Historical Geography* 26.4 (2000), 567. Rose uses the photographs of Lady Hawarden and her daughters as her example. In cataloguing the images for the archive, the Victoria and Albert Museum concentrated on aspects of the images that would often go unnoticed, but changed the relationship of the researcher to the images once the bibliographic references were taken into account. She recognizes that photographs, when used by scholars, are neither scientific nor artistic but cultural documents.
Don Mitchell posited that the definition of *culture* best functions within production and reproduction in the contemporary city and that *culture* as an ontological entity does not exist. In essence, culture is created and thus remains in a state of constant flux. By employing cultural geography to explore rephotography, this dissertation explores both traditionally held views of landscape and contemporary concepts of space and place. The meaning of *landscape* has changed as well, particularly with regard to the cultural landscape, which is produced by and through time and human intervention. As such, the urban landscape is not a thing to be studied, mapped, or photographed, but also a field where issues of gender, race, and socioeconomic traits are worked out.

First, Mitchell provides a comprehensive introduction and historiographical analysis of cultural geography. At the same time, he also skillfully defines and traces the origins of culture and landscape as they relate to contemporary geographic studies. Photography plays a particularly important role when Mitchell explores the reemergence of Glasgow, a city that serves as Pittsburgh’s economic, industrial, social, and cultural doppelganger. As he compares photographs made in the 1950s with those from the 1980s, he identifies a distinct shift in the city’s presentation: from that of a lived city brimming with residents and activity “to a city as landscape, a place devoid of residents, a landscape in which people are only visitors and welcome mostly as consumers (especially of imagery).”\(^8\) The visual evidence provided by rephotography, then, allows for the depiction, transition, and evolution of a city’s cultural and social lives.

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More recently, Nato Thompson’s “In Two Directions: Geography as Art, Art as Geography” and Trevor Paglen’s “Experimental Geography: From Cultural Production to the Production of Space” and “Invisible: Covert Operations and Classified Landscapes” synthesize artistic practice with a critique focused on contextualizing cartography, cultural geography, and the artistic visualization of social space. In Paglen’s photographs of covert locations, what remains invisible in landscapes often shapes our perceptions of what is visible. So too with Smith’s images of the symphony hall, market house, and soot-stained buildings that gradually gave way to empty lots, parking garages, and sand-blasted walls. Although this is not a rephotograph per se, the dichotomy of individual locations being reduced to a past and present is made apparent in Rebecca Solnit’s introduction to Invisible in which she discusses one of the first photographic images: Louis Daguerre’s 1838 photograph of the Boulevard de Temple. Although it was taken in the middle of the day on a busy Parisian street, only one figure is present—a man having his shoes shined. This is due exclusively to the fact that the emulsion that Daguerre was working with was not as sensitive to light as we are accustomed to with today’s films and cameras. As Solnit notes:

> the photograph is usually described as failing to show the people who were on the boulevard. It could also be described as a different way of seeing—the image saw through the people present to perceive all the hard still surfaces […] showing us the world as we do not see it.\(^\text{19}\)

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This way of understanding vision is also applicable to rephotography. Or, more precisely, it is the type of vision that we have when encountering a side-by-side comparison of a photograph and its rephotograph. The layering and condensing of time serves to blur the fifty years of change.

Rephotography is increasingly being seen as an appropriate and logical document, tool, and methodology within the social sciences as seen in several chapters in the recently published (2011) *SAGE Handbook of Visual Research Methods* written by Mark Klett, Jon Reiger, Eric Margolis, and Jeremy Rowe. As a springboard for research and a basis for conducting my rephotographic survey, several books provided guidance: Mark Klett’s *Third View*, Martin Aurand’s *The Spectator and the Topographical City* and Don Mitchell’s *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction*.²⁰ All three authors attempt to answer the same questions in different ways. Klett answers issues of human interaction with the environment by comparing rephotographic prints from two different surveys (1977 and 2000) with original large-format photographs from the nineteenth century. Aurand’s was most useful in order to observe how Pittsburgh could be defined by its distinctive topography (being bounded by three rivers and multiple mountains) and how various artists, architects, and planners responded to this unique set of variables. Whereas Aurand relied upon millions of years of geological events and two hundred fifty years of planning and architecture to define Pittsburgh’s natural and man-made landscape, this dissertation uses a much shorter slice of time to plot the changes that have occurred.

been wrought on this city over the past fifty years. This is also why Aurand’s *The Spectator and the Topographical City* is so critical to my study; it takes theories that concern the landscape and transfers them to the realm of cities and their citizens, not to mention urban art and architecture.

The precedents for this rephotographic survey stretch back to the beginning of mechanical and chemical reproduction. The ability of photography to effortlessly recreate a scene was the only prompt needed for photographers to begin rephotographing each other’s work. As early as 1866, Carleton Watkins was rephotographing Charles Weed’s work in order to produce his own portfolios of natural scenes in the West, which he could then resell. These photographs took center stage when, in 2008, the J. Paul Getty Museum organized “Dialogue among Giants: Carleton Watkins and the Rise of Photography in California,” an exhibition that addressed the competitive nature of these and other photographers and how that led to a visual dialogue between their photographs.²¹

Two rephotographic projects similar to my current survey, in that they focus on previous survys as opposed to vernacular images, are Robert Webb’s *Grand Canyon, A Century of Change: Rephotography of the 1889-1890 Stanton Expedition* in which Webb rephotographed all 445 original images produced by Robert Stanton and James Wells’ survey of Thomas and Geraldine Vale’s 52-image project documenting U.S. Highway 89. While this is certainly larger in physical scale (and also in the number of images created by Webb) than my survey, it is also somewhat more contained in that it focuses its

attention solely on one geological formation. Also, in terms of the scale of geologic time, very little has changed with the physical appearance of the Grand Canyon as opposed to the cultural timeline of a city like Pittsburgh. So too is Webb aided by Stanton’s written records of the original survey and the path that it took as it traversed the length of the canyon.

This dissertation also owes a debt to the aforementioned Dream Street: W. Eugene Smith’s Pittsburgh Project, a travelling exhibition of Smith’s Pittsburgh photographs curated by Sam Stephenson and sponsored by the CCP in 2001. This was the first time that such a large number of Smith’s Pittsburgh photographs were seen in one place and consequently, it helped reignite an interest in Smith, his Pittsburgh Project, and the rest of his oeuvre. While this exhibition was not an attempt to recreate Smith’s original intentions, the placement and layout of the photographs depended largely on Smith’s notes and the few photographs documenting the early stages of the project while Smith was still residing in Pittsburgh. Less than seven years after Dream Street closed in 2003, the CCP organized The Jazz Loft Project: Photographs and Tapes of W. Eugene Smith, an equally comprehensive exhibit involving forty-thousand of Smith’s images and four-thousand hours of reel-to-reel recordings made in his New York City loft from 1957-1965. This show then travelled from 2010-2013.

My rephotographic survey is informed by trends in conceptual photography. Whereas I have previously focused on the structural qualities of photography and film, this is a return to a more traditional means of image making for me.22 During my M.F.A.

22 My use of the term “structuralist” refers to the referencing of photography and its representative parts as works unto themselves as opposed to the philosophical definition of
studies in Design and Photography at Virginia Commonwealth University, I was first exposed to the structuralist film work of Stan Brakhage’s *Mothlight* (1963) and Michael Snow’s *Wavelength* (1967). For the first time, I was seeing film itself being used not only as a material in the process of creating art, but as the main subject. With the prompting of these examples, I began experimenting with redefining photography and photographic practice as being more than just a photosensitive reaction in the camera or a chemical process in the darkroom. With these new possibilities opening up for me, I began thinking of ways to create photographs, and photographic imagery, without the aid of a camera. Consequently, I began to draw images with paint markers on 20x24 sheets of acetate (echoing the mammoth-format cameras of 19th century), contact print them, and then develop them. However, I made the conscious decision to exclude the step of fixing them. In so doing, these images, while existing on paper, were not protected from being exposed to light. They were then paired with written imaginary dialogues between two or more people that were themselves matted and framed in a traditional photographic manner. In presenting them, they were kept in sealed light-proof paper safes until a viewer, wishing to see what was inside, opened it and thereby destroyed the image. This act of negation by the audience dealt with ideas of desire, hope, and disappointment—all mediated by a natural act of curiosity. Later experiments led me to manipulate and develop Polaroid Type 59 prints without exposing them first. The resulting images, interrelated systems first made popular by Ferdinand de Saussure in the 1960s. By this, I mean presenting photographs as works dependent on the action of light on a sensitized surface, which is then transformed from a latent image into a visible one. Other examples of structuralist works include photograms or rayograms by Man Ray that make no attempt to hide the fact that they are not naturalistic images of visible scenes.
while abstract and expressionistic, also exhibited accidental anthropomorphic features that cause the viewer to question what exactly they are looking at. It was remarkable that when presented with these Polaroid or silver gelatin based prints, the audience automatically wanted to know what the image was of, unable to comprehend that what they were looking at was not in fact an existing scene, but the result of chance and the natural properties of Polaroid film.

While there has been an increase in showcasing and theorizing photography within museum and academic circles over the past couple of decades, a similar interest in rephotography has only just begun. Two dissertations that have recently been completed include Holly Markovitz’s (Boston University, 2010) "American Landscapes as Revisionist History: The Frontier Photographs of Mark Klett, John Pfahl, Deborah Bright, and Robert Adams" and Marie Shurkus’ (Concordia University, 2006) “ Appropriation Art: Moving Images and Presenting Difference.” Markovitz is concerned with how rephotographers participate in the reimagining and rewriting of the American landscape by either perpetuating the myth of the American West (for Klett and Pfahl) or revealing changes in gender, class, and ethnicity in contemporary America (Bright and Adams). Shurkus, while presenting a history of appropriation art from the 1970s-1980s does take a cursory look at the rephotography of Klett during this time. It is this combination of a relative lack of critical writings relating directly to rephotography and

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rephotography’s emergence as a part of our visual vocabulary that positions this dissertation as a meaningful addition to existing scholarship.

The dissertation is concerned with the dual nature of rephotography as a response to an earlier photograph and as a means of mapping the cultural landscape of a city. As James Corner argues, “the map always precedes the territory, in that space only becomes territory through acts of bounding and making visible, which are primary functions of mapping.”25 A similar statement could be made in reference to photographs and rephotographs. My methodology revolves around the creation of a rephotographic survey of W. Eugene Smith’s *Pittsburgh Project*. As such, I will treat photography and rephotography as opportunities to study the cultural landscape. I will then expand to position rephotography itself as a methodology and concentrates on three themes that will be further delineated: tourism, the palimpsest, and performance.

The goal of this dissertation is to use my rephotographs as case studies in order to formulate a theory of rephotography as a means of investigating how the act of photographing visualizes the landscape. In so doing, these images function as equals to Smith’s original images as opposed to mere derivatives. Watkins’ and Klett’s rephotographs operate as independent images as easily as comparative images for their exemplars. This project aims to contribute to our understanding of how photographers interact with cities, how cultural scholars interpret those images, and how those cities develop around the perceptions of its image. While barely scratching the surface of what

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rephotography is capable of, this dissertation has shown the possibilities for a critical rephotographic study of one specific photographic portfolio.
Chapter 1

**Pittsburgh and the *Pittsburgh Project***

This chapter introduces the history of Pittsburgh and also positions W. Eugene Smith’s *Pittsburgh Project* within the prevailing photographic practices of the 1950s. To understand the *Pittsburgh Project*, one must also be exposed to the cultural and geographic landscape of Pittsburgh. In so doing, it highlights the importance of the *Pittsburgh Project* as a portal for the potential future of Pittsburgh, as depicted in my rephotographs. In *The Story of an American City*, Stefan Lorant included a number of architectural renderings of Pittsburgh’s future with the Three Rivers sports stadium (opened in 1970) on the North Side that resulted in the razing of a railroad depot that Smith captured as well as the Civic Arena (opened in 1961) in the Hill District that once housed many African-American cultural venues. Smith’s arrival soon after the initiation of “Renaissance I,” and my rephotography during “Renaissance III,” highlights two construction and redevelopment projects that radically altered the physical and cultural landscape of Pittsburgh. Where Renaissance I set the stage for Pittsburgh’s future, at the expense of cultural and social landmarks I found that Renaissance III had a narrower focus of preserving both the historic fabric of the city and the natural resources of the region—two ideas that permeated Smith’s portfolio.

**The City of Pittsburgh**

Situated at the confluence of the Ohio, Allegheny, and Monongohela Rivers, Pittsburgh has remained an important and strategic node for commerce and
transportation. From the time it was first surveyed in 1755 by George Washington to today, it has experienced periods of unabashed growth, stagnation, and loss. As measured by the Census, Pittsburgh’s population grew from 1,565 in 1800 to 676,806 in 1950 and then declined to 305,704 in 2010. Control of Pittsburgh also went back and forth between the French and British for much of the eighteenth century.

Over time, Pittsburgh has produced much of the coal, iron, and steel, and the technology to produce those commodities for the United States. For much of the late nineteenth century and twentieth century, Pittsburgh was blanketed by smoke pollution form the massive steel mills lining the banks of the Monongohela River. It was not until 1946 that Mayor David Lawrence finally began enforcing the Smoke Control Ordinance of 1941, which led directly into Pittsburgh’s first Renaissance. For the next 15 years, large swaths of the city including the Hill District, the North Side, and East Liberty were transformed as part of Urban Renewal projects that served to redefine the transportation routes, cultural life, and living conditions of thousands of residents. Today, after the collapse of the steel and coal industries, Pittsburgh has diversified and focused its attention on health care and higher education, with more than twenty-five colleges and universities in the greater Pittsburgh region.

Composed of more than ninety distinct neighborhoods delineated by ethnic makeup (Polish, German, Irish, Jewish, and Italian), geography (the rolling hills, mountains, and rivers), or commerce (headquarters for major banks, hospitals, and even a regional outpost for Google), Pittsburgh can appear insular to the outsider. For

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26 For a more robust history of Pittsburgh, Stefan Lorant’s *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City*, Leland Baldwin’s *Pittsburgh: The Story of a City*, and Roy Lubove’s two-volume *Twentieth Century Pittsburgh* are excellent sources.
photographers though, this provided fertile ground for working. In 2001, five years before moving to Pittsburgh, I had the opportunity to visit the Carnegie Museum of Art and their exhibit on Smith’s *Pittsburgh Project*. While I packed my car for this day trip, I decided to bring a 4” x 5” view camera so that my friend and I could attempt to take contemporary photographs of views that Smith saw. Prior to this, I had never heard of rephotography and it was not something that I thought about again until I returned to Pittsburgh in 2006.

The Pittsburgh that I first encountered in 2006 was on the verge of beginning its third renaissance, preparing for its two-hundred fiftieth anniversary, and attempting to redefine itself in the new millenium. In contrast to the dark and smoky city that Smith worked in, the Pittsburgh of today is a world leader in green LEED-certified (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) buildings with two of the first twelve buildings certified in the United States. Since then, thirty-seven more buildings have been added to this roster with 60 architectural projects trying to obtain LEED certification. The rephotographic survey provided me an opportunity to learn about and discover aspects of this city that would have otherwise gone unnoticed.

**W. Eugene Smith: The Photojournalist**

As a photojournalist working for a range of publications before, during, and after World War II, Smith had the opportunity to hone his craft of creating photo essays. A photo essay is essentially a series of photographs whose purpose is to tell a story whether

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they are accompanied by captions and text or not. With Smith, the art of the photo essay was in the particular way with which he ordered and arranged his images to get the greatest emotional and psychological impact from the viewer. Because of his unwillingness to work with editors, who he believed compromised his stories, he had a reputation for late submissions and long hours in the darkroom attempting to meet deadlines. As will be seen later, Smith’s insistence on full editorial control is also what prevented the *Pittsburgh Project* from being published.

As a photographer, W. Eugene Smith moved freely between photojournalism, fine-art photography, and documentary work, and rephotography. First, he was an accomplished newspaper photographer while still in high school (with one image appearing in *The New York Times*) and then a photographic correspondent during World War II. In the Pacific Theater, he worked with several periodicals before being severely injured by an enemy mortar shell. After the war, he moved on to work with *Newsweek* and *Life*. Later he travelled to Japan on three occasions and participated in a long-term documentary project in Minamata and his extensive Jazz Loft Project.\(^2\) He was also interested in exploring the artistic aspect of photography in the form of images from a broken window in his downtown loft (a series entitled “As From My Window I Sometime Glance”) as well as taking liberties in the printing of his photojournalistic

\(^2\) Curated by Sam Stephenson and the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University, the Jazz Loft Project is the first travelling show on Smith’s work since 2003. In total, the archives feature more than 3,000 hours of reel-to-reel tape featuring some of the greatest jazz musicians of the classical period as well as thousands of photographic prints of the loft environment, artists, and impromptu jam sessions at all hours of the night. Over the course of 3 years, it travelled to six museums including the Center for Creative Photography and the New York Public Library for Performing Arts at Lincoln Center.
images.²⁹ Included among these would be images from the Albert Schwietzer essay, one of which showed the silhouette of a worker with a hand saw that were composited into a photograph of Dr. Schweitzer on the roof of a building.

At the end of 1955, Smith was coming to terms with being a freelance photographer who had severed his ties (or been severed) with Life magazine and eagerly entered into an agreement with Robert Capa and the expanding Magnum Photos. Wholly owned and operated by photographers, this photography cooperative was founded by Henri Cartier-Bresson in the shadow of World War II as a means of supporting photojournalists, covering stories from around the world, and presenting those images to as wide an audience as was possible. Included in the group were Robert Capa, George Rodger, and David “Chim” Seymor, who along with Smith served to redefine the role of the photographer in photojournalism. Although the board of directors at Magnum were well aware of Smith’s history, in terms of his rocky relationships with former employers, his skill behind the camera and in the darkroom were too much to pass up.

Like many photojournalists of the day, Smith first favored the Leica M series, a rangefinder which premiered in 1954, followed by a Nikon F Series and then a Minolta (all 35mm format cameras), although he was apt to use any camera that was available. These smaller, lightweight cameras dramatically increased the available number of

²⁹ For more information regarding his printing, Jim Hughes’ Shadow and Substance has several in depth descriptions of Smith’s activities in the darkroom including pgs. 322-323 when he was working on the Schweitzer photo essay. Jim Hughes. W. Eugene Smith: Shadow and Substance: The Life and Work of an American Photographer. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1989). His use of potassium ferracyanide as a bleaching agent to bring out highlights has been well documented and he was not averse to “sandwiching” negatives in order to create composite images.
negatives from one (in the case of 4” x 5” cameras) or 12 (for medium format cameras) to 36. Suddenly, photographers could capture longer events without switching cameras or loading new rolls of film without worrying about missing any of the action. In 1938, though, Smith was fired from Newsweek for using a medium-format, twin-lens reflex (2¼” x 2¼”) because his editors judged it to be too small, even though its image area was four times larger than that of a 35mm frame. This was still at a time when photojournalists were using 4” x 5” “press cameras” and was only a few years after Henri Cartier-Bresson popularized the idea of using smaller formats in order to gain a new degree of access to his photographic subjects. With the newfound freedom of the 35mm format, Smith would typically shoot with several cameras slung around his neck, each with a different type of film, speed of film, or lens. Able to withstand the rigors of shooting day in and day out in extreme situations, the smaller-format 35mm cameras were a logical choice. Relatively lightweight and able to accept a large number of lenses, this was a camera system that remained a favorite among photographers for decades and continues to be used and collected today for its craftsmanship. Despite his penchant for the 35mm format, Smith was not averse to using a 4” x 5” large-format camera on occasion and particularly for some of his landscapes from the top of Mt. Washington.30 On the following page are the life-size film sizes that Smith used. Clockwise from the top left, they are 35mm, 2¼” medium format, and 4” x 5” large format.

30 4” x 5” contact prints account for Sixty-one pages from the first volume of contact sheets at the Library of Congress. In addition, there is one roll of 2¼” x 2¼” medium format film included in this volume.
Fig. 1:1. Actual size of film negatives that Smith used in Pittsburgh. Clockwise from top left, they are 35mm, 2¼” medium format, and 4” x 5” large format negatives.
Contrary to his preference for a large number of camera bodies, Smith was well known for using a limited assortment of lenses, and it usually was not too difficult to figure out which ones he used in various situations. With the aid of Jim Hughes’ biography of Smith, one can ascertain that Smith favored 21mm, 28mm, 35mm, 85mm and 135mm lenses almost exclusively. What is worth noting about this selection of lenses is the notable absence of the 50mm “normal” lens that most closely replicates our angle of vision for our eyes. In foregoing the 50mm lens, Smith forced himself to move closer to his subjects, both physically and optically. The 21mm, 28mm, and to some extent, 35mm lenses are all wide-angle and would have required Smith to get extremely close to his subject. By inserting himself into the scene, he was also playing an unseen role in many, if not all, of his images. Smith’s choice of the 85mm “portrait lens” allowed him to focus on people while remaining a comfortable distance away from them, particularly when he was inside the steel mills. Finally, the 135mm lens is a telephoto lens that could either allow him to compress space as when he was standing on top of Mount Washington or capture details in objects when he was closer to them.

**W. Eugene Smith In Pittsburgh**

W. Eugene Smith spent parts of three years, exposed more than 18,000 negatives, and dedicated the rest of his life in an effort to capture and then share the nature of

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31 Hughes, *Shadow and Substance*, 424. Photographically speaking, any lens smaller than 50mm, in the 35mm format, is referred to as a “wide-angle” lens and increases the area captured on the film, while a “longer” lens decreases the amount of the scene by increasing the magnification. For example, if one could fit a given subject into a photographic negative with a 28mm lens from a distance of 10 feet, he or she would need to be almost 20 feet away from it with a 50mm lens. Without getting too in depth with the technical qualities of lenses, each alteration in focal length alters the depth of field (the amount of space in a photograph that is sharp) despite the fact that the subject might be the same size in each image.
Pittsburgh as he understood it. It is easy to see why its sheer scale often overshadows the importance of the *Pittsburgh Project* with regard to the prevailing documentary photography practices of the 1950s. According to biographer Jim Hughes, in its published form, W. Eugene Smith’s *Pittsburgh Project’s*:

structure, more episodic than chronological, utilized devices more familiar to fiction than journalism, such as flashbacks, disconnected quotations, and asides. In the final analysis, the essay was good theater. Although it was never disruptive, the author’s presence could be sensed on every page.32

While in Pittsburgh, Smith turned his camera on every facet of life and work in Pittsburgh. He shot vistas from the top of Mount Washington, street signs with names that amused him, rehearsals for plays, interiors from the Carnegie Library and Natural History Museum, and cemeteries. For people and portraits, he shot city council members in their offices, men and women working in factories and steel mills, a parade of animals and their owners in West Park, ROTC cadets marching outside of the Cathedral of Learning, and a family playing cards on a picnic table. He documented Pittsburgh at all hours of the day from sun up to sundown and even created a number of large-format nighttime images looking at the downtown from the North Side. Curiously, the one aspect of life that Smith did not document, and which Pittsburgh is known for, was sporting events. Neither the Pittsburgh Pirates of Major League Baseball or the Pittsburgh Steelers of the National Football League were shot by Smith, although the

outside of the Pirates home, Forbes Field was photographed in addition to a statue of Pirate, Honus Wagner.

The story of Smith’s involvement with Pittsburgh, though, extends long after these periods in 1955 and 1956. In February, 1955, photographer and publisher, Stefan Lorant contacted Magnum to enquire about a photographer to produce approximately fifty images for *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City*, a book to be published for Pittsburgh’s bicentennial in 1958. With financial backing from Edgar Kaufman, for whom Frank Lloyd Wright had built Fallingwater, Lorant initially imagined this as a short-term two-week project. Having seen previous photo essays by Smith in *Life*, Lorant chose Smith for this task although Lorant had also contracted with Margaret Bourke-White and Clyde Hare for images of Pittsburgh. A foreshadowing of the difficulties involved with this book are addressed when Jim Hughes succinctly states that while “Lorant needed competent photojournalism; Gene envisioned art.”

Smith used this opportunity to create a tale of struggle between himself and Lorant as well as an epic story between Pittsburgh’s past and future. In Pittsburgh, Smith seemed conscious that scenes as varied as outmoded industries, decaying neighborhoods, cultural institutions, and Tiffany glass-appointed mansions would soon be erased—literally, visually, and linguistically as the city prepared to leave its polluted past behind it. As examples, the majority of the Lower Hill district, large swaths of the North Side, and former steel mills

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33 Hughes, *Shadow and Substance*, 345.
have all been entirely remade in the vision of modernist urban planners, architects, designers, and politicians.\textsuperscript{34}

The \textit{Pittsburgh Project} was a foreshadowing of Smith’s later work with Minamata (1971-73) and was revolutionary in its novel treatment and redefinition of the photographic essay.\textsuperscript{35} Involving a great number of images, but with sparse, and often cryptic captions, Smith’s intention was for the photo essay to be read in the same way that symphonic music is meant to be heard—as a gradual progression or evolution of images that builds toward a crescendo that is linked by a common theme. Thus the effect of the individual images fades into the background as the impact of the essay is created by the collection as a whole.

Despite his direct involvement with the layout of the essay, Smith was not prepared for the smaller format of the \textit{Photography Annual 1959}, compared to the oversize format of \textit{Life} magazine and its inferior paper and print quality as compared to

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{34}] Beginning in the mid-1950s, ninety-five acres of the Lower Hill district were razed to make room for the Civic Arena. At roughly the same time, the North Side’s landscape was radically altered by the construction of the Interstate system (I-279). These events occurred during and immediately after Smith documented Pittsburgh. Later additions included the building of three separate sports facilities between 1971 and 2001. Finally, former brownfield lands have been transformed into places as diverse as office buildings, industrial incubators, shopping centers, and entertainment districts. Images showing these changes include Dutchtown and Honus Wagner’s statue.

\item[\textsuperscript{35}] W. Eugene Smith and Aileen M. Smith, \textit{Minamata}. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. 1975. Smith’s last photo essay, and one of his most well known, was of Minamata, a small fishing village in Japan that had its food supply poisoned by mercury by the Chiso Chemical Corporation. This photo essay was preceded by an assignment to work on an annual report for another Japanese company’s stockholders, and it was at this point that Smith first became aware of the potential for a future story on the inhabitants of Minamata.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Life or the master prints that covered all four walls in his studio. At the same time, Smith was also faced with poor paper quality in Lorant’s book especially since none of Smith’s images were placed on any of the eight color plates. This is not to say that this was the only time that he encountered problems in the editing of his stories, but while with *Life*, he was working with some of the most talented editors in the industry. In this case, working alone, Smith was solely responsible for the shortcomings of the *Pittsburgh Project*, at least in terms of the *Photography Annual 1959*. In addition, he became more than $7,000 in debt to the Magnum photography collective, which led to an abbreviated tenure at the agency (in addition to almost bankrupting Magnum) and ultimately proved to be the last full-time job that he would ever hold. For the remainder of his life, he worked short freelance jobs before settling down with a temporary position teaching at Arizona State University shortly before he died.

An interesting note regarding the publication of the *Pittsburgh Project* is that although it was commissioned for Lorant’s book celebrating Pittsburgh’s bicentennial in 1958, Smith was not the only person running behind schedule. Complicated by external matters, including the death of patron Edgar Kaufman in 1956, the book was not published until 1964, or six years after the anniversary for which it was originally intended. The popularity of the book cannot be denied as the second printing was released one month after the first and is currently in its fifth edition.

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36 Recently, Harold Feinstein, a photographer who assisted Smith in laying out the *Pittsburgh Project*, wrote a blog entry about his time working on the *Pittsburgh Project* with Smith and Ohio University alumnus, Jim Karales. He also included six previously unpublished photographs of Smith working in his studio with prints pinned to every available wall space. Harold Feinstein. *Gene Smith, James Karales and me: Remembering the Pittsburgh Project*. Web. 3 Dec. 2013 <http://www.haroldfeinstein.com/gene-smith-james-karales-remembering-pittsburgh-project/>. 
By the time the *Pittsburgh Project* appeared in the pages of the *Photography Annual 1959*, for a fee of $1900, Smith had already turned down contracts from *Life* and *Look* magazines worth $10,000 and $20,000 respectively ($86,000 and $172,000 in 2014 dollars). It also contained little of what Smith first imagined this essay would appear like three years earlier. The format in which it was published was by no means the product that Smith had envisioned in scope, size, or content.

While Smith’s Pittsburgh essay was published in the *Photography Annual 1959*, it also made another rarely seen appearance on the big screen in the same year. *Pittsburgh* (1958), produced for the two hundredth anniversary of Pittsburgh, was only screened a few times before being locked in storage for twenty years in Pittsburgh. Recently rediscovered, restored, and renamed *Pittsburgh Reframed (at 250)* (2008), it was brought back to life at the 2008 Three Rivers Film Festival, where it was released as a DVD. In addition to nine of Smith’s static images moving on, around, and off the screen in what can only be described as an early version of the “Ken Burns Effect,” the film, also includes the work of Pittsburgh native Stan Brakhage and crime scene photographer Arthur “Weegee” Feelig.

Although the *Pittsburgh Project’s* story, and Smith’s professional reputation, could have ended on the pages of the *Photography Annual 1959*, the *Pittsburgh Project’s* importance extends far beyond the confines of photojournalism or documentary photography. It is for this reason that it continues to hold the interest of scholars and photographers alike more than fifty years later.
While the Pittsburgh Project remains an artifact, document, and remnant from Pittsburgh’s two hundredth anniversary in 1958, it still offers us a glimpse of a city that was well on its way toward a period of unprecedented change, loss, growth, and modernization. In order to appreciate the end product, however, one must return to the initiation of this project. In addition to Smith and Margaret Bourke-White, Pittsburgh and its people proved fertile ground for other nationally renowned photographers, including Clyde Hare, Roy Stryker, and Elliot Erwitt, who documented Pittsburgh in for both personal and professional projects. Of these, though, Stryker was the first to discover Pittsburgh’s newfound photogenic nature in 1950 after the passing of the Smoke Control laws. He then remained in Pittsburgh for an extended period after having embarked on a new project organizing images of the city for Carnegie Mellon University and the Carnegie Library. Over the course of two years, Stryker and various assistants eventually compiled more than 20,000 images of the city “as an aid to students, teachers, authors, researchers, advertisers and others in need of pictorial material about Pittsburgh.” Today, this archive of images still exists in the Pennsylvania Room at the Carnegie Library in Oakland where it is continually being supplemented with the work of amateurs and professionals alike.

37 Speaking on American Public Media’s American RadioWorks, Dr. Joel Tarr of Carnegie Mellon University remarked that “Pittsburgh, for instance, was known as a “two shirt a day” town—you had to take an extra white shirt downtown, because by noon your shirt collar was smudged up. I like to say that Pittsburgh, “Ring around the collar” was invented in Pittsburgh.” Power and Smoke: A Nation Built on Coal.” American RadioWorks. American Public Media. Feb. 2011. Radio.

One of the difficulties encountered when looking at the *Pittsburgh Project*, or any of Smith’s photo essays for that matter, is that the final product was often impossible to relate to the contact sheets or even to the initial description of the essay. Even with his most famous essays from *Life*, jobs that were meant to take one or two weeks stretched to more than a month, much to the consternation of the editors back in New York. For almost all of his *Life* assignments, in addition to the instructions given to him by Lorant, Smith would have received an extremely detailed shooting script that detailed exactly what shots he should capture as well as the overall visual effect. His penchant for deviating from this script eventually put him at odds with his editors, but it also allowed him to gather numerous outtakes for exploring in the future. Instead of arriving home with merely the shots specified by Lorant, he arrived back in New York with the makings of what could have been a grand oeuvre.

As it stands, the 58 images printed in Lorant’s book give no clear idea of the work that was required for this Sisyphean task. In fact, it is difficult to judge exactly how Smith envisioned his work being incorporated into Lorant’s book when he began the project in 1956. After all, Smith was only contracted to produce one hundred images for Lorant. While many of his images from *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City* were included in the *Photography Annual 1959*, there were also a number of cases where the images were unique to only one of the publications.\(^3^9\) In the case of *The House with Stairs* (Fig. 4:4), Smith used different negatives to print the images in the *Annual* and

\(^3^9\) Comparing *Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City* and the *Photography Annual 1959*, there were six images shared by both publications, forty-four found only in *Pittsburgh*, and eighty-one unique to the *Annual*. 
The two pages in *Pittsburgh* that made up his documentation of a city commission and city-planning meeting more clearly articulate his vision than any of the thematic sections from the Annual even though the spacing and sizing of the images are consistent throughout. Curiously, and in contrast to all of the other photographers included in *Pittsburgh*, Smith’s images were all credited with “Photographed specially for this book by W. Eugene Smith.” Owing partly to the extended shooting schedule of Smith and the delayed publication of Lorant’s book, there was little amity left between Lorant and Smith as bills and debts piled up for both of them. By the time *Pittsburgh* was published in 1964 (six years after Pittsburgh’s bicentennial), lawsuits had been filed by both parties against each other for payment, the return of prints, and the completion of the required work.

**After Pittsburgh**

The final printed outcome of the *Pittsburgh Project*, as seen in the thirty-eight pages of the *Photography Annual 1959* is understandably not the sum of its parts. As evidenced by the nationally traveling exhibition—*Dream Street: W. Eugene Smith’s Pittsburgh Photographs*—that occurred between 2001-2002, although Smith’s prints from Pittsburgh were hardly seen during his lifetime, they were as carefully composed and printed as images from any of his past or future works. For Smith, a purely commercial project instigated by an independent coordinator was as important as any personal project he could hope to complete. Organized by the Center for Creative Photography and the International Center for Photography in New York City, and first

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40 This credit line appears below all of Smith’s images and is unique to his images. Other photographers have either “Courtesey…” or “Photographed by…” in their credit lines.
shown at the Carnegie Museum of Art, *Dream Street* was not only the first major exhibition of Smith’s *Pittsburgh Project*, it was also the first time since his death in 1978 that he had been given a museum exhibition in the United States. Interestingly, during the same period where he was considered unemployable by news and photography magazines in the United States, he was taking part in multiple traveling solo shows in Japan with his Minamata photographs. The *Dream Street* exhibit is all the more remarkable when the final numbers from Smith’s tenure in Pittsburgh are taken into account. During the year that he spent living and the two additional years that he was documenting Pittsburgh, he accumulated more than seventeen thousand individual frames of film, and then printed more than six thousand 5” x 7” work prints, and crafted more than twelve hundred exhibition quality final prints over the next two years. Of these twelve hundred prints, less than two hundred were finally presented in the 2001 exhibition while fifty were printed in Lorant’s book, with another eighty-seven in the *Photography Annual 1959*.41

These numbers are representative of other photographic projects undertaken by Smith including the *Jazz Loft Project* and *Spanish Village* and make it easier to understand how his archives weighed in at more than twenty-two tons when finally delivered to the Center for Creative Photography at the University of Arizona. Ironically, Lorant only used one image out of every two hundred taken by Smith for his book (working out to one frame from every seven rolls of film), and even *Dream Street*, the more encompassing museum exhibition only used one out of every fifty frames.

41 I compiled these numbers from Smith’s archives at CCP, the Library of Congress, and my own personal library.
However condensed these numbers may seem, this exhibition did make a concerted attempt to organize the images as Smith had originally planned. Curator Sam Stephenson focused on ten different themes—among them: street names, portraits, buildings, and steelworkers. The other facet of this exhibition was that it led to a resurgence in scholarship on Smith and had an immense impact on Duke University’s Center for Documentary Studies’ work on the Jazz Loft Project, both of which were coordinated by Sam Stephenson. The work produced by research on the Jazz Loft Project became its own travelling museum exhibit and book in 2009.

Divided into various “chapters” each covering a different subject, the Pittsburgh Project as envisioned by Smith appears more as a novel or symphony in its conceptual form than a routine photographic essay. Visually, each section is an independent essay that only tangentially relates to the sections that bracket it. Textually, the captions are more closely related to the beat poetry that was being composed by many of Smith’s acquaintances in New York than to informative descriptors of what is depicted. And finally, for its visual movement, it found a common ground with classical composers. Although Smith was fond of using the metaphor of musical compositions and their relationships to his photographic essays, the Pittsburgh essay failed to fully unify itself in the end. The difficulty in dividing his project into the themes he proposed, of course, is that this project was never realized as Smith intended it to be, despite the contractual obligations he entered into. Whether this was through ignorance of the situation he was

42 As published in Jim Hughes’ Shadow and Substance, Smith wrote in a letter to Albert Schweitzer (a Nobel laureate and composer): “I am a composer, and even though I compose less well, am less endowed, than was Beethoven [above “Beethoven”, Gene penciled in “Bach”]—nevertheless, my emotions, my giving, my necessity to effort, might very well be equally intent.” Hughes, Shadow and Substance, 320.
involved in or in the hope that he could succeed in swaying Lorant as he had done regularly with his editors at Life, it resulted in a series of fragmentary photographic statements that failed to coalesce. As such, it is only through the work of museum curators or ad hoc arrangements in books that we know the Pittsburgh Project. Although Smith did have the liberty of more than fifteen years to arrange these images, it was this freedom or liberation from outside editorial control that became more of a burden than anything else. In addition, as Smith positioned the Pittsburgh Project as the culmination of his career and one of the greatest photographic works to be realized, he was also setting the bar so high as to be unattainable. Given his meticulous nature for organizing stories while working for Life, his actions during the construction of the Pittsburgh Project should not be surprising, yet the important distinction is that he no longer had the logistical, monetary or editorial support of Life—he was now his own boss.

During this time, Smith was not the only photographer bringing a unique viewpoint of American culture to the public. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, Robert Frank was already engaged in his work on The Americans. Even more importantly, though, Edward Steichen, in his role as director of photography at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), had organized the Family of Man exhibit and catalogue in 1955. Including four works by Smith (with “The Walk to Paradise Garden” featured as the final image in the book), seven images from Frank, and two hundred seventy-one other photographers from around the world (both famous and unknown or anonymous), Steichen sought to reconceptualize our approach toward and relationship with humanity in light of the burgeoning Cold War. With his brother-in-law, and noted poet, Carl
Sandburg writing an introduction to the catalogue, Steichen created a means through which to sell the American way of life as it traveled around the world from 1955-1962 under the auspices of the United States Information Agency. In so doing, he created one of the first “must see” exhibits that, despite its very public missteps, became one of the most popular in the history of MoMA in addition to becoming an international phenomenon in the form of a book and travelling exhibition. Travelling to thirty-seven countries over eight years, The Family of Man exhibit functioned as a de facto goodwill ambassador. Formally, the images from The Americans and the Pittsburgh Project were a mirror of The Family of Man, but they acquired markedly different meanings with their distinct presentations. Whereas The Family of Man is a celebration of humanity, mainly through the eyes and actions of American or Western photographers, The Americans treads a fine between being a critique of our ways of life or a celebration of change.

With the Pittsburgh Project, though, Smith sought to anthropomorphize Pittsburgh through the extensive use of photographs of buildings, signs and other elements of the urban fabric much as Eugène Atget had done with Paris fifty years earlier. In writing about contemporary photographer, Zoe Leonard, Margaret Iverson comments that:

Leonard’s project, then, in some way resembles Eugène Atget’s documentation of old Paris around 1900, which was also prompted by its ongoing demolition. There are clear allusions to Atget […] in the fascination with shop windows, the attention paid to lowly and overlooked
quarters [...] and in the organization of the photographs into thematic chapters.  

While Georges-Eugene Haussmann’s work in Paris began in 1853, it was not completed until 1927. This enabled Atget to work from 1897 to 1927, first as a personal project and then under the direction and sponsorship of the Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris, documenting the narrow alleys and streets that would eventually give way to the grand boulevards that Paris is known for today.

Smith was neither the first nor the last photographer to intentionally focus his lens on the cityscape of Pittsburgh. Luke Swank, a Johnstown, Pennsylvania native and modernist photographer participated in the first photography exhibit at MoMA in 1932. Swank’s photography of Pittsburgh’s people, neighborhoods, and buildings in the 1920s and ’30s offer a prelude to Smith’s images two decades later. Later in the 1950s and 1960s, Clyde Hare began a decades long project of photographing Pittsburgh’s ever-changing skyline. Taken chronologically, each of these photographers’ works contributes to a greater understanding of Pittsburgh over time.

Authorship, unity, and representation are at the heart of rephotography, but it is surprising that they were cited in this article as applying wholly to photography in general. And, as Jno Cook writes:

The implications of Steichen's show—as the epitome of the condition of photography—were not neglected, however. The book fully addresses the

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43 Iverson, 805.

44 Entitled Murals by American Painters and Photographers, 65 artists including Bernice Abbott, George Platt Lynes, Charles Sheeler, and Edward Steichen were invited to participate by curator (and future author of a monograph on Smith) Lincoln Kirstein.
questions it raised: questions about authorship, about unity, and about the representational power of images. Thus, elements of parody reappear at all levels of the book, including many specific images and sequences.\(^{45}\)

The impact of this statement, included in Cook’s conceptual coloring book of Frank’s images, is that these thoughts on photography are as applicable to Smith’s, Frank’s, and Steichen’s works as they are to the rephotographic surveys of Klett and myself.

Authorship, when applied to photography or art in general, is a multi-faceted topic and has been commented on by writers as varied as Michel Foucault, Allen Trachtenburg, and Roland Barthes. Unity with the photographic medium is most applicable to the documentary or photojournalistic forms, of which Smith was a master in both. For Smith’s *Pittsburgh Project*, unity was not merely relevant for the essay as a whole, nor for individual pages, but was applicable to individual images with their physical variables and for the rhythmic flow between individual images. Having worked through the myriad opaque layers of *Life* Magazine’s editors, Smith at last had an opportunity to “own” his images. As we already know, this ownership came at a heavy cost—the near absence of any public exhibition of this project. Finally, representation has been a constant concern in discussions of photography. If we take Smith’s claim that he was creating a portrait of a city at face value, we must necessarily take the time to look deeper

\(^{45}\) Jno Cook. “Robert Frank: Dissecting the American Image.” 2 February 2009. <http://jnocook.net/frank/frank.htm>. While not addressed on this website, the power of images was made apparent by the lack, or censorship, of the final image seen in *The Family of Man* exhibit. Presented as the only image in color for the entire exhibit, it final image depicts a hydrogen bomb mushroom cloud climbing through the clouds and over the landscape. When the book was published, this was the only image excluded.
into his contact sheets. At the same time, we must also question Smith on his excessive darkroom work to create images and moods that could never ethically be called documentary or photojournalistic.46

Despite Smith’s failure at acquiring a suitable publisher or venue for his work, he nonetheless left future viewers and scholars with an archive composed of 1,200 exhibition quality master prints culled from more than 18,000 negatives. Whereas only 88 were published in the 1959 Photography Annual, 155 were printed and exhibited for Sam Stephenson’s Dream Street show and catalogue. The Pittsburgh Project offers an unparralled view of an American city undergoing rapid and permanent changes in its physical layout and makeup from the perspective of one photographer. Smith’s juxtaposition of mansions and decaying neighborhoods (neither of which would survive urban renewal projects), street signs with unique names, children playing games in the streets, and shots of downtown life peopled by businessmen, church going couples, and city workers captured and contributed to the character of Pittsburgh. While only a small percentage are republished here, each pair of images offers a particular perspective that allows the viewer and reader to better understand and visualize the field of rephotography and changes in the cultural landscape.

46 One of the most accomplished photographers, Henri Cartier-Bresson, turned his back on photography for the last 29 years of his life to explore media that they felt captured the world better. As Bresson noted, “All I care about these days is painting—photography has never been more than a way into painting, a sort of instant drawing.” Andrea Scala, About Photography (Raleigh: Lulu, 2012) 48.
Chapter 2

The Genealogy of Rephotography

The camera and the computer—like the camera obscura in the eighteenth century—are not just devices for making images, but tools through which to investigate the natures of reality, of perception, of knowledge.\textsuperscript{47}

This chapter traces the development of rephotography from the 1850s up until the present day. I begin with contemporary photographers Michael Kolster and Mark Klett and works backward to the 1860s with Timothy O’Sullivan, Carleton Watkins, and Charles Weed all competing to capture the same views of the American West. I then end with an example of Smith’s own use of rephotography in Pittsburgh.

With the founding of the Rephotographic Survey Project (RSP) by Mark Klett in 1977, the concept of rephotography was finally defined and brought within the folds of fine art photography. Also, at approximately the same time, there was a renewed concern in global ecological and geographic changes and rephotography was claimed by both physical and cultural geographers as a way of surveying changes in the natural and man-made environment.\textsuperscript{48} Once geographers were made aware of the significance of Klett’s Second View in 1977, it was quickly embraced as a tool for investigating processes and tracing developments as diverse as farming in Africa to glacial retreats in North America.

By virtue of the requirements for scientific surveys, rephotography was imbued with a


\textsuperscript{48}In 2012, National Geographic photographer James Balog released \textit{Chasing Ice}, a film begun in 2007 that recorded the erosion and melting of glaciers due to global warming from around the world using both time-lapse recording and rephotography.
mathematical and methodical accuracy that is a requirement for such surveys. In serving two very divergent roles, while nonetheless producing formally similar images, rephotography has refused to confine itself to either art or science.⁴⁹

Rephotography is the deliberate creation of a photographic image that already exists in the form of a previous photograph. To varying degrees, the time of year, time of day, and subjects within the scene can be replicated along with the scene in front of a camera lens. At its core, then, rephotography is a conceptual practice whose pursuit is as simple as standing in the exact same position as another photographer.⁵⁰ As a strategy, rephotography is useful for (re)discovering the past and/or the present. While one photographic image only has the ability to show one small fraction of a second’s worth of time, a rephotograph can illustrate the change that has occurred over a much greater period of time, while multiple rephotographs can make visible changes brought about for a variety of reasons.

Therefore, at least two images must exist first in order to constitute a rephotographic survey: the original image and a later image. While there are historical

⁴⁹ Recent dissertations employing rephotography include James Wells, II’s *Western Landscapes, Western Images: A Rephotography of U.S. Highway 89* (Kansas State University, 2012), Kun-Ting Li’s *Rephotography Using Image Collections* (National Taiwan University, 2011), Soomin Bae’s *Analysis and Transfer of Photographic Viewpoint and Appearance* (MIT, 2009) and Claudia Mitchell’s *Knowing My Place: Learning Through Memory and Photography* (McGill University, 2009). In addition, Master’s theses include “*Can’t You See the Sun’s Settin’ Down on our Town?”: *Decline, Space, and Community in Frisco City, Alabama* by Mary Taylor (University of Mississippi, 2011) and Christopher Gat’s *Feature-based Matching in Historic Repeat Photography: An Evaluation and assessment of Feasibility* (University of Victoria, 2011).

⁵⁰ Kun-Ting Li’s dissertation *Rephotography Using Image Collections* (National Taiwan University, 2011), provided a new perspective on creating rephotographs. Instead of having to stand in the exact same spot as a former photographer, Li created a computer program that digitally stitches together crowd-sourced images in order to replicate the original photograph.
and popular precedents for this form of image making, it was not until well into the second century of photography that rephotography began to be systematically employed by members of the scientific community and others outside of the purviews of pure image making.

**A Survey of Rephotography**

By far, the first and most common name to appear in historiographical reviews of rephotography is Mark Klett’s. As a geologist by training and with experience photographing for the U.S. Geological Survey, Klett had the required background needed to investigate man-made interventions in the landscape in a precise and methodical manner. With the help of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), and their program of documenting the United States just after its bicentennial in 1977, Klett, along with JoAnn Verburg and Ellen Manchester among others formed the Rephotographic Survey Project (RSP). Considering this was the first concerted effort to rephotograph survey images from the nineteenth century, Klett was quite ambitious in that he chose to focus on approximately one hundred sites, and especially in the time before GPS existed. Originally shot between 1977 and 1979, and produced as a book in 1984, Mark Klett and the RSP’s *Second View: The Rephotographic Survey Project* served to define the art, science, and practice of rephotography as it exists today. For the first time, rephotography was presented as a legitimate form of photographic, artistic, and scientific expression. In contrast to the pastiche and appropriation art that defined the Pictures Generation, Klett referenced positivism and treated his rephotographic surveys as
objective and scientific expeditions. Created without affect, he ensured that every rephotograph was as exact as could be managed and it would not have been unusual for his team to dedicate hours to re/creating one shot.

As the pioneer for bringing rephotography to the public’s attention, Mark Klett continued to explore this field and in 2000 published *Third View: Second Sights, A Rephotographic Survey of the American West*, in which he revisited and rephotographed more than one hundred of the sites that he first explored in the 1970s. One of the reasons cited by Klett for this project was the remarkable expansion of the West. From public works to housing, many of the sites photographed experienced more change in the last twenty years than the one hundred years separating the first set of images. It was during this time period that the western United States experienced a faster rate of growth than any other geographical area. In addition to the photographic examples, Klett and his team included hours of recorded interviews with residents of towns near the sites, videos of their travels, and 360° panoramic photographs of the areas around the rephotographic sites on a supplemental DVD.

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51 The Pictures Generation emerged from the popular culture of the 1950s and 1960s and were influenced by the French philosophy of the 1960s and 1970s. Although it originally referred to a small group of artists including Sherrie Levine and Robert Longo, it came to encompass other appropriation artists such as Richard Prince and Louise Lawler.

Fig. 2:1. *Rock formations, Pyramid Lake, NV*, Timothy O'Sullivan, 1867

Fig. 2:2. *Pyramid Isle, Pyramid Lake, NV*, Mark Klett, 1979
The most important element of this project was not necessarily the physical book that was produced, but the website and accompanying DVD that acts as an independent and complementary project. As stated by Klett, the book was only published as a means of getting the DVD into the public’s hands. In addition to an interactive map showing the locations of many of the sites, Flash (a computer program that allows for the sequencing of images on web sites or other programs) was utilized in order to create slideshows with one original or vintage image slowly dissolving into its rephotographed partner(s). One other interesting fact regarding the Third View Project is that, at least in Klett’s eyes, he and his team were not rephotographing the nineteenth century masters for the second time, but rephotographing their own work from the 1970s for the first.

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53 Mark Klett, personal interview, 17 April 2009.
This is due in part to the immense change rendered on the Western landscape during the last 30 years. Although other photographers and artists, not to mention geologists and geographers, have explored this field, few have accomplished it with the nuance of Klett.\textsuperscript{54}

Besides founding the RSP and authoring a number of rephotographic and landscape photography books, Klett is also the subject of William Fox’s \textit{View Finder: Mark Klett, Photography, and the Reinvention of Landscape}. In this book, Fox, who has constructed a career out of investigating man’s place within the landscape through poetry and prose, follows Klett and his team of photographers as they take part in the survey work required for \textit{Third View}. Over the course of a month, Fox, Klett and close to a dozen graduate students search for sights that may well have remained unseen by human eyes since Klett photographed them twenty years earlier. The difficulties encountered by Klett and his team were compounded because almost all of these sights/sites are located in desolate and remote areas unserviced by paved roads or utilities. As a result, there was little room for error and the stress brought on by the need for a “perfect” shot was demonstrably more than on a normal photo shoot.

Writing in an accessible, almost diaristic way, Fox was able to recreate the intensity of racing against the clock as Klett and his team moved from location to location (often hundreds of miles away from each other) day after day over the course of a month. As time progressed and one season of shooting led to three summer’s worth of travelling and winters spent compiling images and notes, Fox went from being an

\footnote{\textsuperscript{54} The one exception to this would be Robert Adams who was a part of the New Topographics movement in the 1970s. His images of civilization encroaching on the Western landscape were models for Mark Klett and his survey team.}
outsider to an integral member of the surveying team even though he had never been
trained as a photographer. In reviewing the taxonomy of views of the American West,
Fox established a lineage from the 1860s through the Twentieth Century with Edward
Weston, Ansel Adams, and Robert Adams providing a rhetorical link for Klett’s
rephotographs.

These ideas were explored by Michael Kolster, who has slowly been compiling
his own rephotographic study concerning the environs of San Francisco, Las Vegas, and
New Orleans. Kolster has visited New Orleans five times over the past three years in
an attempt to map and trace the rebuilding strategies employed by the municipal and
federal governments. While Hurricane Katrina had already left its mark on the natural
and urban landscape of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast by the time Kolster arrived
there, he has spent the past few years “previewing” future disaster sites for
rephotography. Examples include San Francisco and its earthquake prone region and Las
Vegas as it slowly comes to terms with its ever growing need for water in an otherwise
inhospitable landscape. Taken together, these projects ask “if,” “how,” and “when” these
cities will address rebuilding in the face of unprecedented loss. For Kolster, his work
blurs the boundary between rephotography as a strategy or a methodology.

With Dialogue among Giants, the 2008 exhibition of Carleton Watkins’
photographic work of California from the mid to late nineteenth century at the John Paul
Getty Museum in Los Angeles, viewers were exposed both to his mammoth negative
prints and his relationship to contemporary photographers including Charles Weed and
Eadweard Muybridge. For the first time, I viewed examples of rephotography from a

55 Michael Kolster, personal interview, 16 April 2009.
time before it was formally named and used in a way that I was previously unaccustomed to. In addition to a large suite of images (both daguerreotypes and albumen prints) from the first generation of gold rushers, there were an equal number of prints from the Yosemite area, more than thirty years before it was named the nation’s second National Park. Included were multiple instances of Watkins finding an ideal vantage point and then returning to it on multiple occasions in order to create additional sources of income. Although not conducted with the rigorous scientific standards adopted by Klett and others, they were nonetheless deliberate choices on the part of Watkins and Weed. It also showed how Charles L. Weed, a former assistant to Watkins later returned to many of these documented viewpoints as a way of building his own portfolio. Images from both of these examples were typically of natural formations including Half Dome and the Bridal Veil Falls in the Yosemite Valley. This aspect of commercial competitiveness is missing from today’s legally conscious artists, but evidently was not below the freewheeling photographers of the Wild West. The distinction between these examples of Watkins and Weed, and what Mark Klett, or myself, have done is that contemporary uses of rephotography are focused on the changing landscape and not changing fashions in the viewing (and collecting) public. There is no desire on my part to obscure the originality of Smith’s images and ideas, precisely because without Smith’s previous forays, my rephotographic images would not exist. In Watkins’ and Weed’s case, much like prospecting gold miners (of which Watkins was one when he first travelled to California from South America) photography, to include portraitists and landscapists, was still a speculative endeavor.
Watkins and Weed worked with mammoth-plate cameras which were upwards of 18” x 22” and would dwarf the large-format 4” x 5” cameras utilized by Klett. Watkins and Weed also endured other hardships not faced by present-day photographers. Besides the transportation of these cameras, some of which weighed more than fourteen hundred pounds when loaded with the light-sensitive plate, they also had to sensitize these glass negatives and develop them immediately on site due to the nature of the wet-plate process. For them, the darkroom was not an unused corner of the basement or a carefully climate-controlled room in a studio, but the same wagon in which they kept the rest of their living and photographic supplies. Thus, while not adhering to a strict treatment of rephotography, Watkins’ and Weed’s efforts into travelling back and forth to these same scenes is evidence of their desire to take part in this dialogue of image making.

A well-documented example of this rivalry occurred in a set of five images depicting the Vernal Fall in Yosemite Valley. First appearing as a glass stereograph in 1858, it later served as a model for a magazine engraving in 1859. Watkins again made his way, in 1861, to this unique natural feature and set up his mammoth-plate camera in the exact same location as his earlier photograph. Then, in 1864, Weed made his way to the same spot and, once again, rephotographed the falls. Finally, in 1872, an anonymous photographer, possibly Watkins yet again, rephotographed the falls for the final time.

Another set of images, once again by Watkins and Weed but this time with Weed establishing the original location, is taken from the Mariposa Trail high above the

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Yosemite Valley floor.\textsuperscript{57} These two images taken two years apart and both being printed on albumen silver paper could almost be confused with one another. On closer examination, though, there are a number of stylistic and environmental changes that serve to justify the elevation of Watkins as a photographic master of the landscape while Weed has been relegated to the footnotes of photographic history. Weed, like many photographers documenting the American West posed a man next to a near-limbless tree in order to give a human scale to the scene. Watkins, though, preferred to allow nature to dictate the relative scale of the landscape. In doing so, the rocky formations, including Half Dome in the distance, take on an even greater presence. He was also aided by two unrelated events. The first was a perfect stream of water going over Bridal Veil Falls in the middle of the image. In contrast, the Falls were broken up in Weed’s image, possibly as a result of photographing in the fall rather than in the spring. The second aspect was the loss a tree limb that essentially broke up the relationship of Half Dome to the other rock formations in Weed’s image. For Watkins, this was just one more way of creating a unified landscape scene that set him apart from his competitors.

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Fig. 2:4. *The Valley, from the Mariposa Trail*, Charles L. Weed, 1864

Fig. 2:5. *Yosemite Valley from the “Best General View,” No. 2*, Carleton Watkins, 1866
While it is true that Mark Klett is a recognized photographic artist in his own right and is represented by several commercial galleries, he is still known primarily for his forays into rephotography. This is in contrast to the works of Watkins and Weed who worked both in concert with each other and as rivals within a purely commercial realm where they themselves worked for companies and individuals who produced large portfolios of images that were then sold on the East and West Coasts. Operating in this way, they, along with a multitude of other photographers contributed immeasurably to our understanding of the landscape, activities, cities, and people of the West during its formative years. However, it also placed them in positions where ethical decisions regarding originality or ownership were placated by the demands of a populace hungry for photographic images. The need for new images, in terms of production date, eclipsed the need for new images in terms of novels views or scenes. While the Getty exhibition exposes many detail of photography in the mid and late-nineteenth century, including the examples of rephotography cited above, it does not attempt to delve into the reasons for such actions.

With the popularity and of Second View and Third View, rephotography has begun to be embraced by contemporary photographers referencing the work of famous (Bernice Abbott) and anonymous photographers alike. It has also been utilized in so-called “then and now” books that focus on various cities by making use of photographs from amateur and professional photographers. Pittsburgh, in particular, has been the subject of two such books: Pittsburgh: Then and Now by Arthur G. Smith and Pittsburgh: Then and Now by Walter C. Kidney. While both of these texts provide short
captions for each photograph or set of images, neither of them delves into the actual practice or theory of rephotography. What they do offer, though, are images that have become more than just clichés of Pittsburgh, they have become a type of visual shorthand for how to depict and recognize Pittsburgh. There are also a few surprises hidden away within these books. For example, in Arthur Smith’s (no relation to W. Eugene Smith) book, there is an image from 1950 that is without a doubt, the model for Eugene Smith’s later work from 1956.\(^{58}\)

\(^{58}\) Corsini, Harold. *Fineview Hill, North Side*. Pittsburgh Photographic Library, Pittsburgh. Also found in Arthur G. Smith’s *Pittsburgh: Then and Now*. This image was originally taken in 1950—more than five years before W. Eugene Smith arrived in Pittsburgh. Corsini was a lifelong Pittsburgh resident and aided Roy Stryker in founding the Pittsburgh Photographic Library which is now located in the main branch of the Carnegie Library.
What is important about this pair of images is Smith never, for some unknown reason, gave credit to Corsini for establishing this particular vantage point. From a cursory glance of this scene, it was not a particularly obvious location for making a photograph. Having died in 2008, it is not known if Corsini was aware of previous images of these stairs, but it is undeniable that Smith was aware of Corsini. This is but one more facet of rephotography that could be explored—the copying of scenes.
(purposeful or not) from scenic vantage points that were designed to be photographed from.\textsuperscript{59}

In popular culture, rephotography played a small, yet major, role in Wayne Wang’s and Paul Auster’s \textit{Smoke} (1995).\textsuperscript{60} In the film, Augustus (Auggie) Wren, played by Harvey Keitel, begins every morning by opening his New York City cigar store and then walking across the street to set up a tripod at the exact same location and take one picture of his surroundings. It is as though Auggie is attempting to cement his own existence or status in this world by creating what are in effect self-portraits. Although a livelihood would appear to provide evidence of a life, Auggie requires the verifiable proof that photography offers as a way of realizing how much exists outside of his discrete place in the world. As rolls of film are developed and printed, 36 exposures at a time, he carefully pastes them into a photo album every few weeks. Over the course of years, he is then able to contemplate the changes that occur every day around him yet also remain unnoticed by his everyday customers even under the closest examination without the aid of this serial record.

In this scene, which takes place in Auggie’s apartment one evening, Paul, played by William Hurt, sees for the first time what his local cigar seller has been working on for more than a decade. Although it is never explained why or when Auggie began this, and the photographs themselves only appear tangentially in three other scenes, it remains one

\textsuperscript{59} The town of Hernandez in New Mexico actually erected a barrier around the spot where Ansel Adams took \textit{Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico, 1941} in order to prevent future photographers from copying it and potentially selling their images.

of the scenes that defines and unites these two characters for the remainder of the film. It also provides the bookends for a film that is essentially concerned with the act of observing human behavior and the impact it has on those who surround us. As Auggie shows Paul his album containing more than four thousand images taken from the corner of 3rd Street and 7th Ave., Paul expresses disbelief and confusion that one person could be so deliberate and committed to creating a new rephotograph every single day. Here, we have Auggie describing what he sees in his images:

Paul: They’re all the same.

Auggie: They’re all the same, but each one is different from every other one. You got your bright mornings and your dark mornings. You got your summer light and your autumn light. You got your weekdays and your weekends. You got your people in overcoats and galoshes and you got your people in t-shirts and shorts. Sometimes the same people and sometimes different ones. Sometimes the different ones become the same and the same ones disappear. The Earth revolves around the Sun and everyday, the light from the Sun hits the Earth at a different angle.61

The next morning, Auggie is seen standing on the corner opposite from his shop behind a camera on a tripod looking expectantly at his wristwatch. When the time arrives, Auggie presses his cable shutter release and only then takes a look through the viewfinder as if he is mentally checking the scene with all of the ones that have preceded it. Finally, he takes a small folded piece of paper from his shirt pocket and puts a check next to some unseen notation—the date presumably? It is this behavior that is odd at first

61 Ibid.
glance, since Auggie is working backwards in terms of taking a photograph—why does he look through the viewfinder only after exposing the film? However, it is not so much the exact placement of the camera as it is the practice, or more precisely, the performance, of taking the rephotographs that most captivates Auggie. In fact, from the images that slowly fade in and out as Paul flips through the albums, there are different points of focus and amounts of depth of field in each shot. In some images, a figure in the foreground is in critical focus, whereas in others, it might be Auggie’s own cigar shop, or a bus moving by in a blur. The response that Paul has towards Auggie’s images can be typical of many people’s reactions upon seeing a novel art form for the first time. While many, if not all of the images do look alike, the fact that they belong to the world of photography is enough to recognize innate differences in them.

Auggie’s looking through the viewfinder only after the shutter has been released is a recognition on his part that many of the events in our lives are the product of happenstance or accident. It is also, as Auggie notes, his own little spot in the world that somehow resists change while the rest of the world continues it advancement toward the future. Only when Paul finally slows down and begins to contemplate the images in front of him does he begin to recognize the draw that they hold over Auggie. Just as in the case with Klett’s images, the importance doesn’t always lay in the dramatic changes from one image to the other. Instead, the viewer of these photo albums is kept alert by barely perceptible change occurring on a much smaller scale. Indeed, what is captivating about this project is the sheer multitude of images—one a day for more than 4000 days. Our sense of time changes with the realization that change occurs on many different scales.
As a result, any change occurring within this landscape is muted by the lack of temporal distance between images. Thus, it is not from one image to another that we view change, but from one year or decade to another. This is further confirmed when Paul flips one of the pages and comes upon his recently deceased wife. Without explicitly stating it, Auggie defines change by the people who inhabit the urban landscape even more than from the urban environment. As seen in the many examples, it is the ordinary-looking cigar store that remains the one constant in an ever-changing world.

Only at the end of the film does Auggie give an explanation (or rather, tell a story) for how he took up the practice of photography. From this, it becomes more clear that Auggie has little interest in photography as a hobby, but only within the power that photographic images have to arrest a viewer’s sight and slow down the normally frenetic pace of our vision. With this in mind, it makes sense that this camera, the iconic Canon AE-1 (a camera introduced in 1976 and still used today by photography students), has never seen another site, been on a different corner, or even been unlocked from its tripod. Its use value derives from its ability to faithfully capture the scene in front of its lens. It provides a greater sense of meaning for Auggie than his selling of cigars because he is contributing to the historical record of Brooklyn.

**Conclusion**

From the previous examples, rephotography has enjoyed a long and varied history even though it has only existed in the fine art world for less than 40 years. Despite being an accepted practice from the moment the first image was preserved on a piece of sensitized metal, rephotography was not formally named until almost 140 years after it
was first explored. In this time, the critical conversation has shifted and altered our perceptions about the meanings and practices of rephotography. Whether this was due to a misconception of its relative importance or as a way of hiding the fact that these were not wholly original images in terms of conception is a subject that deserves to be debated, but it is nonetheless outside of the scope of this current study. What is important, though, and remains the same regardless of the method in which they were created is that they still adhere to the same basic principles. That is, the deliberate investigation and revisitation of a previous scene in order to gauge elements of stasis or change for the benefit of the fine arts, social sciences, or scientific communities.
Chapter 3
Rephotography: Intersections with Photojournalism, Documentary, and Fine Art Photography

I am constantly torn between the attitude of the conscientious journalist who is a recorder and interpreter of the facts and of the creative artist who often is necessarily at poetic odds with the literal facts.62

This chapter explores the relationship of Smith’s photography and my rephotography to photojournalism, documentary, and fine art photography—three modes of photography that Smith constantly and effortlessly moved between while in Pittsburgh and throughout his career. There are a number of points that can be made regarding the relationship of rephotography to other forms of photography, and a logical strategy must be employed in order to accurately plot these relationships. First, an effort should be made to distinguish between photographs as creative images (“photograph-as-art”) and photographs as objective images (“photograph-as-document”) and the impact that this distinction has on defining rephotography.63 Secondly, rephotography will be shown to behave as both a documentary and a fine art image. Combined, these two issues relate to

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63 The debate over “photograph-as-art” versus “photograph-as-document” has existed as a philosophical argument since the invention of the photographic process. It has been widely discussed in sources as varied as Roland Barthes’ Camera Lucida and Susan Sontag’s On Photography to Pierre Bourdieu’s Photography: A Middle-brow Art and Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste. These authors investigated the aesthetic and sociocultural reception that photographs receive regardless of their purpose. It was also the theme of a show at the Weatherspoon Art Museum in 2012. Entitled “To What Purpose? Photography as Art and Document” the show explored the questions raised when documentary images are viewed within a fine art context.
how photographs acquire meaning, particularly in the case of Smith. For Smith, he was
an active participant in all three modes of photography mentioned above. They also
shape the viewing experience of the spectator and determine the venue for which these
images are perceived.

While every photograph is an artifact, and thus a document, not every image is
documentary in nature. A difficulty encountered with rephotography is its ability to shift
between various modes of photography much more easily than a traditional image. This
is a result of rephotography’s relatively recent emergence within the world of fine art
photography after first gaining a foothold in commercial landscape images.

Rephotographs today look as familiar on the online homepage of The New York Times as
they do on a gallery wall or in a book.64 Because rephotography evolved primarily from
the work of one photographer, its borders and subject matter were defined by the needs
required at one particular moment. Rephotography has necessarily evolved according to
the specific needs and requirements of every photographer who has adopted it as a
methodology. For Klett, rephotography originally stood for documenting one hundred
years of geologic changes. With his decision to revisit the sites of his first
rephotographic endeavors, it became a tool for drawing attention to twenty-five years
worth of human change.

64 One of the more notable uses of rephotography on The New York Times’ website are
the satellite views of Japan before and after the 2011 tsunami. Utilizing a “slider” the viewer can
move effortlessly between views from 2009/10 and 2011. The same treatment was given earlier
to the earthquake in Haiti and the destruction in Port-au-Prince.
after-tsunami.htmlhttp://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/01/14/world/20100114-haiti-
imagery.html
As all photographic images share a familial bond, whether it is of the mechanical, chemical, physical, or optical kind, it would at first glance appear to be obvious to treat all modes of photography in a similar manner. Therefore, before aspects of rephotography are considered, Smith’s relationship to photojournalism, documentary, and fine art photography will be discussed. Exploring all three modes will enable the reader to better situate the current rephotographic survey within Smith’s oeuvre and other prevailing photography practices.

**Photojournalism**

Photojournalism is a branch of photography in which a photographer tells a story objectively and in a timely manner while adhering to ethical and moral guidelines. Decisions concerning what pictures to take or not to take and which to show the public are primarily made by the photographer. With image manipulation, there are strict guidelines established by photography and journalism associations (Reuters, Associated Press, United States National Press Photographers Association), yet many photographers, Smith among them, have worked in a grey area.

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65 The ethics of photojournalism vary between news associations but common themes that run throughout their codes of conduct involve excessive or localized edits, positioning or interfering with subjects, and ensuring captions are truthful. From the examples of Smith discussed earlier, he was always prepared to violate these rules in an attempt to obtain the shots he felt were needed to complete a story or convey the emotions present at the scene to the viewers reading and looking at his essays from the comfort of their homes.

66 In 2013, two renowned photojournalists, Paul Jansen and Paolo Pelegrin were reprimanded for manipulating images. For Jansen who won, and almost lost, the 2013 World Press Photo of the Year award, for excessive burning and dodging of the digital file for the photograph that he submitted. At the other end of the spectrum, Pelegin was admonished after winning the Freelance Photographer of the Year from Pictures of the Year International for a series of images from Rochester, NY. In Pelegrin’s case, he posed a subject, misidentified the subject, and then crafted a caption that would suggest a more ominous scene in addition to plagiarizing portions of the caption.
If we view W. Eugene Smith as a photojournalist, then are my rephotographs (or the rephotographs of any other photographer) of his work to be held up to the same set of ethical and journalistic standards that he would have faced? Similarly, if we understand Smith’s work to be documentary in style, how are we to make sense of the shooting scripts he was given while working for Newsweek and Life magazines or by Stefan Lorant in Pittsburgh? Finally, if we were to position Smith as a photographic artist, we are still left with the details of his employment with Newsweek, Life, the Black Star Agency, Magnum, and multiple corporate clients. Taking these divergent roles into account, it is clear that Smith was constantly moving between artist, photojournalist, and documentarian while also deliberately blurring the distinctions between all three modes of photography. From looking at his wartime photo essays, it would be easy to infer from his work that his photography was merely polemical towards the conflict he was documenting for national publications, but he was much more aware of his own talent than to allow his photography to do all of the communicating. Rather, he adopted a process of so-called self-censorship in which the scenes he chose not to document explained more about the war than the scenes toward which he ultimately pointed his camera. This was in direct response to the United States government’s own wartime censors, but Smith purposefully chose to take a much more conservative approach toward censoring his own work. As will be seen with his documentation of Minamata, when he no longer had to worry about outside editors or clients, the censorship of images would end.
In the end, Smith endeavored not only to leave a lasting mark on the photographic world, but also to enact change through his images. Of the countless examples of this from his time spent at *Life*, two photo essays stand out from the rest: “A Man of Mercy” (1954) and “The Nurse Midwife” (1951). Dr. Albert Schweitzer was the subject of the first essay, published shortly after he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1953. Despite Schweitzer being a notoriously difficult man to communicate with, Smith imbued his image of Schweitzer with a sense of compassion that is missing from written accounts of him. With the Nobel Prize award money ($33,000 or more than $290,000 in 2014 dollars), Schweitzer established a leprosarium in Lamberne. In addition, Smith’s essay also brought a new and larger audience to Schweitzer’s work and multiple funding opportunities that allowed for the expansion of services to the local populace. Similarly, with Maude Callen as the subject of “The Nurse Midwife,” Smith made a large section of the American populace aware of the inequities faced by African-Americans. As a result of the article and images, Smith paved the way for the construction of a new community healthcare center in Pineville, South Carolina in addition to much need supplies as basic as sterile bandages, cribs, and running water from the donations of tens of thousands of subscribers to *Life*. Both of these articles exhibit the archetypal portraits that would become Smith’s calling card and would appear in the Pittsburgh essay with an even greater impact.
Documentary Photography

Documentary photography is similar to photojournalism in that the primary objective is to photograph an event in an detached manner. However, as documentary photography can be practiced by amateurs and professionals alike, there are no firm ethical or moral guidelines that must be followed.

If rephotography is seen simply as a documentary practice, how do we interpret the original images? While the intentions of the rephotographer should be examined, there is always the question as to the intentions of the original images. Rephotography can only exist as the conscious effort to replicate or document a scene that has previously been recorded. That is, it exists firmly within the confines of documentary photography. As such, rephotography also exists as a posteriori practice in that it is very rare that the original photographer takes part in the rephotographs. One recent example of this would be the work of Peter Feldstein and his photographs of the populace of Oxford, Iowa.

Starting in 1984, he attempted to photograph the entire population of this small town. Beginning again, in 2005, he made an effort to rephotograph the same people in addition to the relatively small number of people who had moved there in the intervening years.

At the same time, however, the relationship that rephotography has with commerce, media, and the social and natural sciences (in that it is used on a daily basis for showing everything from climate change and natural disasters to selling cosmetics)

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67 A concise introduction to the differences between documentary photography and photojournalism can be found in Antonin Kraochvil and Michael Persson’s essay for the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard. The purpose of their article is to illustrate how the same medium can present two radically divergent messages even when photographing the same scene or topic. Kratochvil, Antonin and Michael Persson. “Photojournalism and Documentary Photography.” Nieman Reports.

should not preclude it from being an acceptable art practice. Part of the power of rephotography lies in the extreme possibilities that can occur: either the absence of any relevant change or the outright reordering of the landscape to leave the scene unrecognizable. Is not art the presentation of reality and normalcy in a novel way? Because the subject matter of rephotographs is shifted from the subject matter of the original images, the viewer is confronted with a pair of images that are composed of a visual language that is both naturally accepted and foreign.

Any discussion of American documentary photography (or photography in any vein for that matter) of the 1950s should begin with *The Americans* by Swiss photographer Robert Frank. What is most interesting about Robert Frank and W. Eugene Smith is that they both produced some of their most powerful images on foreign and unfamiliar shores. While Frank is most famous for his critical study of American culture in *The Americans*, he soon left his career as a photographer in order to concentrate on creating independent films. Similarly, after his travels in the Pacific during World War Two, Smith spent the last few years of his life documenting the Japanese fishing village, Minamata. In conjunction with an introduction written by Beat writer Jack Kerouac, Frank essentially redefined what it is to be an American. As Frank was finishing his work on this book, Smith was laying the groundwork for the *Pittsburgh Project*, and *The Americans* was published at the end of Smith’s tenure in Pittsburgh. Armed with a Guggenheim fellowship, much like Smith, Frank traversed the United States to collect images that went in the face of previous documentary accounts. In his Guggenheim application, Frank wrote that he hoped, "to produce an authentic contemporary document,
the visual impact should be such as will nullify explanation.” From an American flag adorned apartment building and a street scene depicting segregation on a trolley to a waitress in a prototypical diner, Smith valued Frank’s images that managed to evade previous American photographers who were more content with producing more anodyne images in the decade during and after the Second World War.

As a way of positioning Smith’s work in relation to Frank’s, one should compare two thematically similar sets of images from each photographer. In the first case, Smith documented the city planners of Pittsburgh ensconced in their wood-paneled conference room presumably pondering the future of Pittsburgh. Taken from a variety of angles, Smith’s images depict these planners as men detached from the realities of their decisions. Presenting an alternative view of city government, Frank’s image of City Fathers—Hoboken, New Jersey shows five distinguished looking gentlemen (four of whom are wearing black-tie and top hats) behind a rope receding into the background with bunting. With a relatively wide frame of view, Frank’s image displays wariness towards imposing (either himself or his camera) into the action. This is at odds, not only with Smith’s example, but also with almost all of Smith’s work.

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Fig. 3:1. *City Fathers*, Robert Frank, 1955

Fig. 3:2. *City Planning Commission*, W. Eugene Smith, 1955, Vol. 2, Pg. 9
As such, it is difficult for the viewer to read the action contained within the frame. It could just as easily be a sporting event as a groundbreaking ceremony and other than the ceremonial title of “City Fathers,” it is likewise difficult to find out who these individuals are. This is not the case with Smith’s work because they are framed and set within the confines of city government. The most important aspects of Smith’s images are not the participants or background scenery, but the documents that are held in their hands or laid on tables. Although these plans might never see the light of day or are years from completion, they nonetheless create a link between the present and future existence of Pittsburgh.

The second set of images also depict people, but in markedly different ways from the first series. Frank focuses on a cowboy rolling a cigarette outside of Madison Square Garden.
Fig. 3:3. *Rodeo Cowboy, Madison Square Garden*, Robert Frank, 1955

Fig. 3:4. *Steelworker*, W. Eugene Smith, 1955, Vol. 2, Pg. 158
Smith also chooses an environmental portrait as he turns his camera lens toward what is presumably an out-of-work steel worker leaning against a building façade. Both of these men possess masculine traits that separate them from fellow city contemporaries, yet Frank’s image includes a trace of sexual tension that is absent from the more lively character in Smith’s image.

While Frank was much more firmly entrenched in the straight photographic esthetic, Smith continued to adhere to the style of photojournalism that he learned while following shooting scripts for *Life* magazine. Yet both Smith and Frank sought to create images that would be seared into the viewer’s minds. In Frank’s opinion, “my photographs are not planned or composed in advance, and I do not anticipate that the on-looker will share my viewpoint. However, I feel that if my photograph leaves an image on his mind—something has been accomplished.”

Both of Frank’s quotes, and their similarities to Smith’s writings, indicate the importance of examining their respective (and divergent) images. They also point to a new type of editorial photography where each image must stand on its own in addition to working cohesively within a larger body of work. This is indicative of the changing nature of documentary photographers in the 1950s.

The rhetoric of documentary images also acts as identifying features of a particular time period. Occurring within the first full decade of the Cold War, these two projects served to paint America in radically different lights. For Smith, there was a concreteness about the change that was about to envelop Pittsburgh even though it was

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70 Frank, 115.
not visible to the naked eye. With Frank, however, there was a desire to depict America in a different light than it had been seen before. Taken together, though, they both paint portraits of an America and Americans that had been unimagined until they turned their respective cameras outward and inward.\footnote{This is similar to the differences between Sandburg’s poetic prologue and Kerouac’s rambling introduction, reminiscent of \textit{On the Road}, which was published in the same year, and Smith’s prologue for “Labyrinthian Walk.” Sandburg ends his prologue with the following poem: \begin{quote} There is only one man in the world \hspace{1em} and his name is All Men. \end{quote} \begin{quote} There is only one woman in the world \hspace{1em} and her name is All Women. \end{quote} \begin{quote} There is only one child in the world \hspace{1em} and the child’s name is All Children. \end{quote} Carl Sandburg, \textit{Prologue, The Family of Man}, 5. Sandburg’s and Steichen’s attempts to encapsulate the entirety of the human condition in this show and poem mirror the same drive of Smith as he sought to create a portrait of Pittsburgh just one year later.}

Even more than in other examples of documentary photography, the viewer is aware of the conscious work involved in the act of rephotography. One negative aspect of rephotography, though, is its unspoken insistence that it portrays a current state of affairs (the \textit{now} of now and then) by virtue that it is in essence updating a now historical image. Instead, it has no more of a claim on reality than the original image, whether it was taken one hundred fifty years ago in Mark Klett’s case or fifty years ago in mine. Once the film has been exposed, the image is always already outdated. This deals much more with the public’s ignorance over the rhetorical nature of photography, yet it also lays the groundwork for many rephotographic projects in both the United States and elsewhere. This fallacy is also present in other forms of photography but is tempered by the fact that the viewer is aware that the events occurring within the image are always bounded by the frame. With rephotography, though, the continuum of time and space is
emphasized to a point where the two elements begin to take on roles at least as large as the subject matter itself. This feature is one facet of rephotography that will be explored in further detail and will also be evident in the photographic images provided. The one element that photography and rephotography do share, however, is that of “presence” which all too often is mistakenly equated with that of reality. Instead, presence should be seen as a statement that “yes—there is a photographer, a camera, and a scene that is being depicted by the camera” instead of the insertion of a philosophical debate on the nature of reality.

While I have made an effort to distinguish between photojournalism and documentary photography, it is also important to understand the similarities that exist between these two genres. In the most simple of terms, photojournalism can be defined as the truthful depiction of a scene that is often accompanied by words and/or captions and is either used to illustrate a story or to stand alone. The method of transmission is usually accomplished by publication in a newspaper or magazine. Documentary photography, on the other hand, serves as a historical document and could potentially encompass multiple images in order to showcase a topic in detail. Documentary photographs are most often presented as projects in magazine portfolios or as books unto themselves. However, even with these elementary definitions, they both share certain traits regardless of their cause for existence or method of their dissemination. As far as the Pittsburgh Project was concerned, Smith was operating, at least in Stefan Lorant’s mind, as a freelance photographer producing images for a for-profit enterprise—The Pittsburgh Story. In this way, he was able to pit verisimilitude against naturalism and
create single images from multiple negatives in much the same way that contemporary visual artists utilize Photoshop to combine various digital images. Although he was no stranger to this type of photographic manipulation, as evidenced by his work with *Life* including his article on Dr. Albert Schweitzer, he was also working under a different set of standards by photographing for what was in essence a coffee table book.

Another aspect that is important when discussing the natures of photojournalism and documentary photography are the aspects of the subjectivity and objectivity of the photographer. As far as Smith was concerned, to be an objective photographer was to do a disservice to his audience. Just as a storyteller uses words to guide an audience, so too must the photographer use their images to prompt the viewer.

**Fine Art Photography**

Fine-art photography, while encompassing some examples of photojournalism and documentary photography, is commonly seen as being created primarily from the vision of the photographer. Within fine-art photography, there are a number of styles including landscape, portraiture, conceptual, and architectural, not to mention rephotography and appropriation art. An important distinction to be made between appropriation art and rephotography is the subject matter of an ongoing critique. In appropriation art, the original printed image is treated much more as an exemplar whose purpose is to serve as a model for subsequent copies. The subject for a rephotograph is

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72 As recently as the 2014 College Art Association Conference, the session “Regarding the Photographs of Others: The Promise and Problem of Sourced Images” focused on appropriation as it exists today within the physical and digital realms. Examples ranged from family photo albums from China, Google Street View images, and Richard Prince’s appropriations.
also the imagery that lies within the photographic frame, but with a few distinct differences. While appropriation art should resemble the original image both physically and visually, the onus of the rephotographer is on retracing and recreating the actions of a previous photographer.

As Jim Hughes notes, as far as Smith was concerned, the difficulty in getting the Pittsburgh Project published “allowed him to continue viewing himself in terms of art rather than journalism.” On the surface, his individual images appear to be standard photojournalistic or documentary images. When viewed as complete essays, however, they take on an entirely new character where the viewer is able to see and understand the ebbs and flows of Smith’s storytelling. Second only to his editing and sequencing, it was his relentless pursuit of creating the perfect photographic print in the darkroom that separated him from other photojournalists of his time and brought him closer to the fine art world. Although the distinction between these modes of photography were much starker during his lifetime, more than thirty years after his death, the art market is much more welcoming toward photojournalists and documentary photographers. Among the standouts are Sebastiao Salgado (who is often referred to as a fine art photojournalist) and the late Tim Hetherington.

Equally as interesting are the issues that occur when a documentarian of his stature is confronted with the commercialization of the fine art world. One of his most well-known images from the Minamata series (1971-73), *Tomoko Uemura in her Bath* was pulled from circulation and had ceased being reproduced at the behest of Smith’s

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wife Aileen in 2000. One of the few times that it has been exhibited was in 2010 for “Unbearable Beauty: Triumph of the Human Spirit, Photographs by W. Eugene Smith and Aileen M. Smith” at the Muscarelle Museum of Art at The College of William & Mary. As part of the supplementary programming there was an conference on the dangers of mercury poisoning (which affected the city of Minamata) which played a role in the exhibition of this particular print. For Sam Stephenson, a curator who has put together two large-scale exhibitions of Smith’s works, he understood that “the context of this conference, with its practical goals and concerns as opposed to an exhibition of fine art for fine art’s sake, or the making of subject into object, made this presentation okay.”  

Rephotography Across Artistic and Photographic Genres

As practiced by painters and visual artists for centuries, including Leonardo da Vinci’s multiple versions of his Virgin of the Rocks, Claude Monet and his water lilies, Giovanni Piranesi and his Veduti di Roma, and Vincent Van Gogh’s landscape and still life views, the desire to revisit sites or scenes previously documented is not peculiar to the new photographic world.

In one particular example from 1857, Roger Fenton, a photographer and documentarian of the Crimean War, photographed Falls of the Llugwy, at Pont y Pair in Wales in the same location as previous plein air painters and guidebook authors.  

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Indeed, this could have been one of the earliest examples not of rephotography but of the photographic redescription of painting, an important concept during the early days of photography while it was still searching for its own uniqueness. A similar case exists with the earlier Mission Heliographique of 1851 when the Commission des Monuments Historiques appointed a select group of photographers to document the architectural history of France. Fifty years later, referring to many of the same architectural works, in addition to masterpieces from the history of art, Andrew Carnegie opened the Hall of Architecture at his Museum of Art in Pittsburgh with more than one hundred forty plaster casts of European cathedral facades, Greek temple sculptures, and Greek and Roman columns. Thus, precedents for rephotography are well established.

Carnegie’s opinion was that a plaster copy of a priceless original was much more valuable as a cultural artifact than a mediocre original sculpture or architectural element. To think of this with a photographic example is how Ansel Adams’s (or any photographer’s) images printed contemporaneously with the development of their negatives are much more highly valued than images reprinted years and decades later. What remains interesting is the potential impact that photographic thinking has had on the curators of these museums as they work to affix value to these images. The lesson in this is not that the technical quality of an older image is any better, but there is a

76 This is closely tied with Walter Benjamin’s concept of the “aura” as defined in Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction from 1936.

77 Ashley la Grange, ed. Basic Critical Theory for Photographers. Elsevier: Amsterdam, 2005. 4. This is only one aspect of a particular photograph’s worth. Other criteria that can impact the worth of any image is the size of the edition, the relative place within that edition and the literal size of the image, to say nothing of the condition of the print.
perception that an earlier image is somehow more “authentic” than a newer image. The major difference is that Adams’ *Moonrise over Hernandez* printed in 1941 is a physically and visually different object than a *Moonrise over Hernandez* printed in 1972. In some cases, the older photograph can be of a higher quality, but there is no reason to assume that any image is better than another based solely on the year it was printed.

In addition to the work of Michael Kolster, which I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Dawn Roe is another contemporary photographer who does not necessarily adhere to a strict definition of rephotography with her series entitled “From Time to Time.” Roe is largely concerned with how our perception of spaces and/or objects at particular moments in time affects our understanding of them and ourselves. By depicting the same scene with both the frozen moment of photography and the mobility of video montage, her work attempts to force a dialogue between the still and moving image. In this manner, similarities between each medium (and the scenes involved) are referenced while simultaneously acknowledging the distinct manner that each medium is received. For subject matter, there is a comfort in our ability to relate to recognizable elements of the domestic sphere such as ledges, windowpanes, bird baths, and views from a backyard deck, and wind blown curtains, but a tenuous journey into the more ambiguous territory of landscape has begun. It is here that time moves most slowly, and distinctions between “now” and “then” become less clear. From her still and moving images, we gain a better understanding of the present while being reminded of its foundation in the past. In using two distinct forms of media, Roe’s unique treatment of rephotography engages the viewer as her images move in and out of focus and fade in
and out. Although not strictly rephotographic with a camera located at a fixed point during various periods of time, she has nonetheless created a series of images that questions our perceptions of the relationship between space, place, and time.

Instead of concentrating purely on the relationships between man-made objects and nature, she has turned her attention toward aspects of memory and phenomenology. For Roe, this means that “Our memories manage to be at once both frozen and fleeting, continually squeezing through the fissures of our mind. It is through our perception of these phenomena that we subconsciously and unwillingly flit around from space to space and time to time.” Thus, the re-imaging is truly referring to mental images as opposed to ones grounded in reality. Taken as a whole, her project exposes the ephemerality and temporality of our memories, and the media used to preserve those memories, through the use of photographic and cinematic motifs.

For Michael Kolster, rephotography offers the opportunity to investigate the impact of natural disasters, some of which have not even occurred yet. Following Hurricane Katrina’s impact on New Orleans, he has visited the city five times over the last three years to rephotograph certain locations. In addition to his work in New Orleans, he has also explored Las Vegas and San Francisco in the west. As water becomes scarcer and a more valuable commodity, the man-made environment of Las Vegas has the potential to change dramatically. So too with San Francisco and the ever present threat of a devastating earthquake. Together, these projects ask questions pertaining to “if,” “how,” and “when” these cities will address rebuilding in the face of unprecedented loss. They also examine how photographs affect how we perceive change

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78 Dawn Roe, Artist Statement.
and our attachments to certain places when we have prior knowledge of the possible losses. Although Kolster has obtained rephotographs for these cities on between two and five occasions, this project will not be complete until nature has made her presence known. In essence, Kolster’s project is conceptually similar to that of Klett’s San Francisco, but with the paradigm-changing event lurking just below the surface.

The notion that these two photographers put forth is that there is no reason for rephotography to remain planted squarely in either the past or the present. For Kolster, the unknown future plays as important a role as the past and the present. So too, with Roe’s imagery planted squarely with a fluid and shifting concept of present-ness that never quite loses its immediacy. With this in mind, I have become more aware of the part that the movement of time plays in relation to the frozen moment that is photography. This is particularly important when paired with Klett’s viewpoint following Second View that although there existed a possibility there could be rephotographs of his work, this second rephotographic survey would not be completed by him. It took Klett more than twenty years to recognize that he had the opportunity to rephotograph his own work. Whether Kolster will have to wait for that same period of time is unknowable right now, but it is only through the fact that he recognizes the role that time plays that he will be able to complete his surveys of Las Vegas and San Francisco.

My rephotography project adheres to aspects of photojournalism (by virtue of Smith’s involvement with Magnum Photos), documentary, and fine-art photography. At various times throughout my survey, I believed I was working solely within one field
when in reality, I was continuously shifting between these three contradictory practices. Whereas Smith was constrained by the events occurring in front of his camera, I had the liberty to take as much time as required to frame my point of view. At the same time, this rephotographic survey is also thoroughly grounded in conceptual matters because it points outside of the frame toward a larger, more obtuse, theme: the passage and scale of time.

This theme is one that emphasizes change as unavoidable natural and man-made forces in the environment. As I have stated previously, rephotography is a conscious effort, and this project has changed in tone from when I first began rephotographing. This major shift was an effort on my part to have my scenes remain unpeopled. I adopted this subjective stance in order to concentrate more fully on Pittsburgh itself. In so doing, I am applying Smith’s stated desire to create a multi-faceted “character” out of Pittsburgh itself. I am also inserting myself into these images by virtue of their subjective nature. Thus, what seems at first to be an objective “straight” photograph is also inherently subjective—a tension that exists in many images yet is rarely explored. While taking my photographs, I am always conscious of this duality and the requisite freedoms and restraints placed on my creativity. I am acutely aware that I am also engaged in an extremely objective form of image making in that I am not able to deviate from the various physical spaces that Smith inhabited more than fifty years ago. Shortly after I completed my preliminary rephotographs, I realized that I had a preference for unpeopled scenes regardless of what the original photograph looked like. My preference for empty scenes was a desire to concentrate the viewer’s attention on the main subjects (shared
with Smith) within the image; the buildings, the street signs, and the landscape. It was my opinion that if I included people as Smith had, urban and architectural elements within the photographic frame would have been subsumed by the accidental presence of people who, although they belonged to the city also belonged to a certain time.

**Conclusion**

Together, photojournalism, documentary, and fine art photography contribute to create a more well rounded portrait for how W. Eugene Smith behaved and operated as a photographer. The aesthetic and editorial choices he made while in Pittsburgh were directly influenced by the lessons learned while working in each of these modes at various points throughout his career. These three modes of photography also begin to lead the reader and viewer toward my rephotographic survey. Instead of just relying on these three approaches to explore the relationships between Smith’s images and the rephotographs, I use them as a springboard to study aspects of tourism, palimpsest, and performance that are inherent within them.
Chapter 4

Rephotographing Pittsburgh

Rephotographs rely on a visual language that is almost universal […] The ability to interpret these differences is not universal; because when two photographs, an original and a rephotograph, are paired together the combination may illustrate change and the passage of time, but neither image can explain the events that led to that change.79

My conceptualization of the rephotography of Smith’s images are centered around tourism, the palimpsest, and performative aspects of photography. Smith’s Pittsburgh Project exists in a physical form, yet the cumulative history of the individual images remains fixed in potentiality until an outside instrument is introduced—the set of rephotographs featured here. However, instead of Smith’s search for visually and thematically unifying subjects such as street signs, steel works, staircases, architectural facades, city planning meetings, and portraits, my rephotographic project seeks to cover and recover Smith’s paths through the city. Rather than focusing on one particular geographic location or event in time, these rephotographs take as their subject one particular photographic essay and documents what Arthur Smith calls “the predominant theme in the urban environment”—change.80 This change is apparent mainly through the cost of urban renewal and development programs of the 1960s, which affected large swaths of Pittsburgh’s ethnically and culturally rich neighborhoods. Change is also the

80 Smith, Arthur G. Pittsburgh: Then and Now. 45.
dominant theme, or at least the source of many rephotographic projects. More importantly, the viewer and reader will be able to trace the growth of a photographer and a city in both visual and written form.

This chapter introduces the process of rephotographing Smith’s *Pittsburgh Project* and is followed by three related chapters, each of which is structured around several sets of photographs and the concepts that permeate from them. I will examine the phenomenon of rephotography and mapping as the sum of three interrelated themes: tourism, the palimpsest, and performance. Together, these three themes help to define what rephotography is and place it within a larger critical and multi-disciplinary framework.

The field of tourism studies encompasses facets of cultural studies, cultural geography, sociology, and anthropology. After a few isolated studies in the 1960s and 1970s, tourism studies gained traction in the 1980s and continues to evolve as a sub-discipline of anthropology. I will look at tourism and the images that Smith produced from various tourist vantage points located around Pittsburgh including photographs taken from Mt. Washington, the Schenley Bridge, and a photograph taken from Ridgewood Street.

In the next section, I will examine the concept of the palimpsest by looking at Smith’s image of the Polish Army War Veterans Home, a street sign embedded in the brickwork of a house on Breed Street, and a view from the steps of the Soldiers and

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Sailors Memorial. In the first two examples, the overarching scene remains unchanged from the original image to the rephotograph while revealing or erasing one important detail. For the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial, the entire nature of the scene has been altered by the removal of one of the main subjects: the Syria Mosque (a music venue that was at one time home to the Pittsburgh Symphony). The result is a photograph that dramatically reflects the change in relevance of cultural activities from the 1950s to the 1990s. Each example points towards rephotography’s ability to remain separate from yet inextricably linked to the original photograph. In each of these cases, it is not a palimpsest that is discovered through layers of dirt, but through layers of time. To discover this palimpsest requires a review of the photographs presented, a critique of the practice of photography, and a appraisal of rephotography itself as a distinct methodology, which will be further defined in the next section.

I will conclude with a discussion of performance and its relationship to contemporary mapping practices, through images taken from Sixth Ave. and along Arlington Ave.. It was along these two corridors, one downtown and the other perched on the side of Mount Washington, that Smith would stand in one spot and turn 360 degrees in order to capture three or four distinct images that bear no relation to one another until one actually follows in his footsteps. This part of the chapter is structured

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82 I was not aware of this aspect until I began my rephotographic survey and realized after a few attempts that I had to remain rooted in one position in order to replicate Smith’s views. I then confirmed this after studying his contact sheets at the Library of Congress. The idea that Smith would stand and rotate in one spot on Sixth Ave. was so unexpected that I assumed it was a chance happening. It was not until I photographed first Saint Paul of the Cross Monastery and then St. Michael’s Church while standing on Arlington Ave. that I realized how integral his contact sheets were in constructing the narrative about the nature of a city. Contact sheets
around pairs of photographic prints: one of Smith’s followed by one of mine. Each of his images include the volume and page number for his contact sheets as recorded by the National Archives. The title of Smith’s image is included in italics as it was named by him, as it is popularly known, or how it has been catalogued in his archive (at the Center for Creative Photography) or museum collections (the Carnegie Museum of Art).

**Rephotographic Methods and Techniques**

The methods that I used to complete my survey can only be termed as twenty-first century versions of what Smith did beginning in 1955. Whereas Smith relied on driving a car, walking, using street maps, and presumably taking the suggestions of friends, I have employed Google Maps and Google Street View for almost every image I have made prior to making an initial site visit. After finding the locations on my computer, I then plotted them on a street map of Pittsburgh with pushpins. The map enabled me to see the relative proximity of one site to another and the unique ways in which multiple sites were grouped in a tight pattern while others appear arbitrarily throughout the city with no particular pattern evident. Although this would not have been a required element for my survey, I began using the map after I saw an image of Smith’s studio in Lorant’s basement in Pittsburgh. I thought that if I was making the attempt to replicate Smith’s movements around the city, I should also adhere to his studio practices. Despite the need to use modern technology for locating these sites, the planning and coordination required of myself was much less than that required of Smith. This is primarily because I was provide the viewer and scholar with an unedited account of the steps between images that cannot be gleaned from a printed photo essay.
looking for precise predefined locations as opposed to seeking out original vantage points.

Employing Google’s Street View also added another dimension to the aspect of performance for this project. Instead of physically walking down the street or occupying space on a sidewalk, I used the Google Maps avatar to explore the urban (digital) cityscape of Pittsburgh. The advantage of this approach is that I devoted more time to the editing and preparation of images rather than finding and scouting locations in person. It also allowed me to interact with the city in a way that would not even have been possible a few short years ago.

After I chose a photograph by Smith, I worked to identify the exact location of it by using the surrounding buildings as a guide, the title given to it, or if I was lucky, my memory of the city. While some of his images are identified by their street name or neighborhood, many others are referred to simply as “steps,” “houses,” or “interior.” After finding these approximate locations, I would mark the spot on a map with a pin for later reference, much as Smith would have done in his rented house fifty years earlier. I would then open Google Maps and use the Street View tool, an advantage in that Pittsburgh was one of the first cities in the United States to benefit from the Street View survey. As a supplement to Google Maps, Google Street View allows the user to move from an aerial perspective of the city to one positioned near eye level in the middle of a street. These views were obtained through the use of a 360° camera mounted on top of

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cars that methodically drove around Pittsburgh for several weeks in 2007. The interface of Street View then gives the user the opportunity to move up and down streets while looking at store fronts or their surroundings. By using Google’s Street View, I could literally walk around in Smith’s shoes without ever leaving the room. The artistic possibilities of this alone, the ability to trace someone else’s steps digitally, are numerous, and do not even require raising a camera to one’s eye. For the purposes of this project, the Street View capability saved me countless hours of driving and walking. After I had found the approximate locations for a few of these sites, I would either print copies of his images to use as references when on location or save them to my laptop.

One important, and deliberate, distinction between my work and Smith’s is the near absence of people in my images. Whereas Smith took pride in his search for his “decisive moment,” I unconsciously worked equally as hard to expunge people from my scenes. First defined by photojournalist Henri Cartier-Bresson, the decisive moment occurs when the shutter opens and the people and/or action within the frame prompt a composition that does not invite immediate closure. The decisive moment is also a deliberate consequence of a photographer who is knowledgeable about what is occurring on the other side of the camera’s lens. In some ways this stems from a desire on my part to recover Pittsburgh’s place as a “character” within Smith’s original essay. Given that so many years have passed between these pairs of images, it would be impossible to recreate Smith’s images person for person. It is also, however, a realization that the changes that have been wrought on this city create a better testament to the effects of humanity than the inclusion of these individual people. In my work the absence of
people only serves to draw attention to the changes in the man-made environment. The acres of housing present on the Lower Hill district and The Point were literally erased from cartographic and collective memories by the emergence of the Civic Arena, Gateway Centers and other public works. It is also a subjective remark on the attitudes of American culture and society to the American “Main Street.” What was once a vibrant street (as it existed in Smith’s images) is transformed into a ghostland. Proof of this exists on the North Side where the Market Hall and train station were being torn down, during Smith’s tenure, only to be replaced by a monolithic indoor shopping and business center that has itself been largely abandoned with the advent of suburban malls and e-commerce.

Even as part of a relatively small resurveying project, I necessarily had to divide my work up into three distinct phases: preparation and pre-visualization, the actual capturing of images, and post-production, which included various modes of and display and exhibition. Each of these was equally time consuming and it was not possible to skip any of the steps even on the “easiest” shots that I came across. They were most valuable though on the difficult shots that would have proven impossible to capture without prior planning.

In terms of the hardware required for this survey, the camera I used for this survey was a Canon 5D Mark III full-frame 22-megapixel camera equipped with both fixed (prime) and zoom lenses. Replacing the traditional black-and-white wet darkroom were a G5 iMac, an Intel iMac, a Macbook and an Epson R3000 archival pigment printer. My choice of software included Adobe’s Lightroom (for initial edits and image
management), Adobe Photoshop (for finetuning images), and Nik Software’s Silver Efex Pro (for translating color images into black and white ones).

The optical mechanics of using a 35mm camera (whether analog or digital) with varying amounts of viewfinder frame coverage, would have also made this a much more difficult task to complete with a film-based camera. This is because the image that is seen in the eyepiece typically ranges from 86%-100% of what will be exposed on the film, depending on what type of camera is being used. In my case, the Nikon D80 only has a coverage of 95% while the Canon 5D Mark III had a 100% field of view, yet I can still see the resultant images immediately on the LCD rear display and can make any necessary adjustments to my framing or point of view. Because of optical properties, the difference between stepping forward or backward or using a wider-angle lens can dramatically alter the final product.

I also always captured my images in the NEF or RAW format in order to facilitate minor editing and to preserve all possible information in the pixels. What this means is that all of the information contained in the original pixels is maintained. The RAW image effectively functions as a digital “negative” and captures much more information than a JPEG or TIFF image could contain although the downside is that it takes up significantly more space on a memory card and the camera itself takes slightly longer to process each image. This is akin to traditional cellulite-based film negatives in that a

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84 The RAW format is an uncompressed image file that includes metadata (in the form of a “sidecar” file) in addition to the unprocessed image. It is only when the file is imported into editing software that the development process begins as it remains a “latent” image up to this point. The advantage of using a RAW file is that all editing on it is non-destructive, in that the edits are saved to the sidecar file rather than the image file.
single negative can generate multiple images that differ greatly without ever physically affecting the original negative.

Upon arriving at a site, I always had a copy of Smith’s original image with me, either with a hard or digital copy, in order to begin the process of finding Smith’s exact location. Whereas Smith would also equipped himself with a notebook in order to keep track of shots and a description of where he was standing in case he had to return at a later date. My RAW images already come with a “sidecar” file that contains a wealth of information ranging from the settings for my exposure to focal length of my lens and even space for GPS coordinates to be added at a later date. This file, separate from the image itself, can be edited within digital editing software. Furthermore, as a digital asset management program, Adobe’s Lightroom program allows for a wealth of information to be added to digital images through the use of keywords and other identifying words. In my earlier preparatory visits to sites, I relied upon the 2.5-inch LCD screen on the back of my camera to quickly proof and compare my shots against examples of Smith’s work. Although this was suitable for test shots, it would not produce sufficient results for obtaining images for my final project. This required bringing a laptop and transferring images immediately upon taking them in order to see my images in greater detail. I could then accurately compare my image on the same scale as the original.

Although rephotography might sound like a simple exercise, especially when the original photograph is present during the reshoot, it is in fact an extremely difficult endeavor when done well. Taking a tip from Mark Klett, I began using a ruler and protractor in order to measure and line up certain elements to ensure that I was viewing
them from the correct angle. For this, I would first measure the distance between two sets of points in Smith’s image and then repeat that process with my own image on the computer. In this way, I would arrive at a ratio that would then allow me to know whether I needed to back up, move forward, or to the left or right. Any adjustment (no matter how small) could have a very big impact on the final result and it could often take close to an hour before I found the proper spot for my tripod and elevation for my camera. This also helped me make choices as to what focal length I would use, the point of focus, and the amount of depth of field that was needed. Upon making the necessary adjustments and finding the exact position that I needed, I could then set my camera on a tripod and take my final shot.

After I obtained a selection of images from my camera and arrived back at my studio, my digital workflow began when I imported them into Adobe Lightroom. This step allowed me to file them in such a manner that I could access them from my archives and to make initial “non-destructive” edits which included white balance and color corrections. Even though my images would be displayed in black and white, I still wanted the best possible image quality before making my preliminary adjustments that would result in a grayscale image. I then exported the images that were closest to Smith’s to Photoshop, where I would continue cropping and editing them. These edits included curves and levels adjustments that would more closely recreate the mood and atmosphere of 1950s Pittsburgh. This was done by layering my image over Smith’s to ensure that the rephotographs were exactly aligned. By adjusting the opacity on the overlying images, I could achieve a great deal of control over the degree to which I
cropped and consequently achieve greater accuracy. The difficulty of this step lay in that I would typically have anywhere from a half-dozen to two dozen images for each of Smith’s photographs. Thus, I was in a position where I might potentially have to crop up to two dozen images before I found one that matched up perfectly. Once the cropping was done and I had found my ideal image, I could then proceed to turning it into a black-and-white image.

Employing Nik Software’s Silver Efex Pro II, a Photoshop plug-in program, I could make my transition from a color image and, at the same time, accurately emulate the film grain structure and print tones of Smith’s favorite films. While there are a variety of ways to turn color images into grayscale or black and white images in Photoshop, none of them have the features that come with Silver Efex Pro. This transition from a color to grayscale image is achieved through the use of proprietary mathematical algorithms that allowed for both global and local changes within the image file, while maintaining an intuitiveness with the program’s interface. The variables that I inputted were then translated into pixilated grains similar to those found in film stock. The “film grain” now appears to form the image rather than pixels. The grain could then be further manipulated and made to appear similar to almost two dozen film brands including Smith’s favorites: Kodak Plus X and Tri X.

Besides the numerous film types, there are also a range of traditional photographic filters that affect contrast and sensitivity to certain colors as well as separate exposure adjustments. Fortunately, because so many of Smith’s contact sheets are available online, I had a much easier time finding the type of film that he used for each
shot as the various film types are printed on the edges of the film by the sprocket holes. Most important, perhaps, I could now digitally adjust the images to create the same effects that Smith did with potassium ferricyanide bleach in order to create the brilliant whites that he was known for. Thus I could digitally recreate the atmosphere that Smith worked so hard to craft with silver gelatin in a process that could stretch toward seventy-two hours in a darkroom in a fraction of the time. At this point, my digital adjustments were complete, yet I still needed to find a suitable format in which to present them.

From physical photographic prints of various sizes to digital flip books, each shift in presentation led to new relationships and understanding between myself and the rephotographic survey. By foregoing analog film and collecting my images digitally, much of my time was spent analyzing images using an iPad on scene, in front of a computer screen in my studio, and on a laptop at home. I had to be conscious that while I was capturing, viewing, and editing, I was viewing my images in color as opposed to Smith’s black and white prints. Whereas the “language” of black and white images is based on shape, line, texture, and light, color images rely almost solely on the photographer’s employment of color. This was an issue that Mark Klett and the other members of the Rephotographic Survey Project (RSP) have not had to address as they use 8x10 view cameras loaded with black and white film to rephotograph black and white images created in the nineteenth century. While respecting the method of image making, the RSP nonetheless still relied on Polaroid test prints to determine accuracy and camera placement prior to exposing the final negatives. My concern had to do with the attention that a color image would draw to itself when positioned next to or compared with a black
and white image. In response, I decided that my survey would be best served by comparing sets of like images, that is, where both Smith’s and my own are presented in black and white.

**Rephotographic Themes**

As diverse a group of concepts these ideas may seem at first, they are integral to my study of rephotography’s relationship not only to its exemplar, but also to unrelated photographic images. While a few of these ideas have been attached to photography in the past, they have not, up to this point, been used in conjunction to form an interconnected theory of photography. By building upon each other, these ideas offer the audience a new way to create, view, understand, and critique photographic images. Although several of these seem similar at first sight, and do overlap to some extent, these are indeed separate concepts and are used in a manner that is not always literal. A case in point would include touristic theories and images and the debt that they owe to both theories regarding performance and acts of rephotography. However, from the examples that will be shown, each concept exists as a separate and independent idea regardless of their surface similarities. It is their novelty that is at once appealing and offers a truly interdisciplinary approach to the study of rephotographs.

The topics of tourism, palimpsest and performance are important because rephotography has traditionally been treated as an endpoint for photographers (and its audience) and as a “result” for scholars for as long as it has existed, partly because it emerged outside of the confines of an artistic practice, but mostly in that photography was employed because it satisfied purely technical requirements. With this approach, I
I am unaware of other scholars, including geologists, geographers, historians, photographers, and social scientists who have attempted to scratch below the surface in order to observe phenomena that are unique and particular to rephotography. In being result driven, they have neglected to look at the “how” of rephotography, an issue that is capable of maintaining interest after being piqued by the novelty of comparing sets of images.

Often the most difficult decision is the one that defines the rephotographic project and how much or how little to include. As seen with other examples from Smith’s oeuvre, there is nothing simple in his work; it often reflects a process of making photography as difficult as possible. Instead of creating a wall between himself and his audience, this behavior cemented his status as one of the most well known photographers in Life’s stable. This is primarily because of his insistence on the viewers to contribute their own views and prejudices to his images, thereby creating a multi-layered visual statement.

Quite contrary to other forms of art, rephotographs are prized not for their formal properties, technical execution, or pictorial representations. They are judged purely according to their ability to line up geological formations, vegetation, or urban structures exactly with previous examples. In my current study, these images will now provide the foundation for an extended study of the language that photography possesses. Rephotographs have the ability to function as images independent of their models.

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85 Smith’s first class at the New School for Social Research was entitled “Photography Made Difficult.” In the class, which was modeled after portfolio reviews with darkroom sessions, Smith would discuss student’s work and lecture on certain topics, but rarely if ever went into the classroom with a cohesive lesson plan.
What emerged from these rephotographs were these three concepts: tourism, the palimpsest, and performance. These concepts can just as easily apply to standard forms of photography as they do to rephotography. Each of these is essential to the study of rephotography and provides a different angle from which to view Smith’s, or for that matter, any photographer’s work. That these theories have not been previously attached to photography should not diminish their ability to accurately remark on the process, creation, and exhibition of photography. In the following pages, I will illustrate each of the themes that I have introduced with several in-depth examples.

Each pair of the following images was chosen for their ability to depict the themes of tourism, palimpsest, and performance. These photographs are primarily exterior or environmental shots focusing on architectural structures or the landscape, although Smith did compose many images inside buildings. Examples of these include the Homestead Steel Works that was demolished more than a decade ago after lying dormant for a decade, department stores in the Golden Triangle area of the downtown, city planning and commission meetings, and the University of Pittsburgh’s Cathedral of Learning. Given the relative stasis of interiors, it is more difficult to convey as much meaning with rephotographs taken inside of buildings. Although a large number of Smith’s images include people, and could even be described as “portraits,” this section specifically

\[86\] Before continuing, it is important to note that these themes were only recognized during and after the process of rephotographing his work and that they do not necessarily correspond to existing theories of photography. These themes also emerged from a paper I prepared for the Framing Time & Place Conference held at the University of Plymouth in April 2009. In addition to an interview that I conducted with Mark Klett, there were approximately twenty other speakers, few of whom adhered to traditional theories. In conversations with these artists and scholars, I began to reconsider my original thoughts and then develop new ideas.
focuses on the changing architectural, geological, urban, ecological, etc. elements in the foregrounds and backgrounds. For Smith, the onus was always on Pittsburgh itself as a character, but it is only through the passage of fifty years that Pittsburgh has finally been prepared for an encore.

The difficulty with any rephotographic survey, but particularly with Smith’s original photographic survey is in identifying the archetype from which to rephotograph. In Smith’s case, although he only made final “master” prints of a few percentage of his images, many of them are closely related. For example, the set of two houses with a staircase going up the side of a hill are remarkably similar.\footnote{These two views can be found on page 2 in Sam Stephenson’s Dream Street Exhibition Catalog and page 101 of the 1959 Photography Annual. From his contact sheets, they are found in the third volume and on separate rolls of film (R319 and R321) with one roll (and 2000 feet) in between them.}
Fig. 4:1. Contact Sheet E9-R319, Vol. 3, Pg. 12
Fig. 4.2. Contact Sheet E5-R321, Vol. 3, Pg. 15
Fig. 4:3. Contact Sheet E15-R490, Vol. 3, Pg. 220

While one of his final prints depicts two people walking down the stairs in order to provide a sense of scale, the image reproduced in the 1959 *Photography Annual* excises those people and in doing so offers a much different sentiment.

Similar to the image of the Duquesne Club that will be explored in the Performance Section, Smith’s original print presents the entire entrance complete with staircase and canopy, while the image in the *Photography Annual* focuses squarely on the group of men in one corner of the image. What then is the image that will form the basis for a rephotograph, and how would one come to that determination? The answer, while
certainly incomplete, is those images were chosen that would most fully depict change and consistency within Pittsburgh. While a closely cropped image might enhance the emotional value of images, the broader, more complete negative provides a better picture for understanding what Smith saw while he was looking through his viewfinder. The majority of the examples shown are images of individual negatives taken directly from Smith’s contact sheets. Where Smith did extensive darkroom manipulation on certain images, I have included those as well.
Chapter 5

Tourism

As Klett has noted regarding the history of touristic image-making, “If you’d gone to the East Coast, they had the old Man on the Mountain [in New Hampshire], for example. And if you stood in one spot, you could see the face of the old man. So all the photographer’s job was to just go there and make the pictures. It was already predetermined.”\textsuperscript{88} By “photographers,” Klett might have been referring to the travelling photographers of the nineteenth century who made a living moving from small town to small town around the country creating portraits and landscapes. They then sold these prints and stereographs to those citizens unable to travel to rural New Hampshire to observe natural rock formations or were mesmerized by the ability to own a portrait of themselves and their families. But, he could have also been referring to another type of image-maker: the tourist. By this, he does not mean a tourist who travels for pleasure or recreation, but that class of people who collect sites (and sights) for their own private consumption. As a potential philosophical discussion, these tourists “look” with their cameras, but they do not “see” with their eyes in the same way that Wittgenstein made the distinction between looking and seeing.\textsuperscript{89} Their task is simply to replicate views that have not only been defined, but also laid out in front of them. In this way, they are not exploring new vistas, but relying upon the eyes of others who have come before them. Whether they leave with a better understanding for what has seemingly appeared in front of their eyes, or simply left with photographic proof that they were present at a certain

\textsuperscript{88} Mark Klett. Personal interview.

\textsuperscript{89} Ludwig Wittgenstein. \textit{Philosophical Investigations}. 66.
location (at a certain moment in time) is up for debate. While nothing wholly original is produced, this is just confirmation that rephotography is not as foreign a concept as it might seem at first; it has simply gone unnamed, and unrecognized, for a majority of photography’s history. Another way of looking at tourism is to explore the motives of the tourist. Smith was working on a three-week assignment from Stefan Lorant as part of Magnum Photo collective. That he alone among the photographers hired for Lorant’s book visited Pittsburgh in each of the three following years is telling.

According to writings on both tourism and vernacular photography, there is a long and storied history of drawing a parallel between art and what are essentially non-art objects. The question that must be asked, then, is whose Pittsburgh are we observing? Is it Smith’s experience as a tourist that we are studying or is it the Pittsburgh that is normally only visible to longtime residents of the city? Is it the vision that Lorant wanted to convey for a larger public? Or, is it the imaginary city that resided within Smith’s mind? Considering Smith had been scheduled to spend three short weeks in the city, it would indeed be natural to view Smith as a tourist. However, Smith arriving in Pittsburgh with a station wagon loaded down with cameras, film, darkroom equipment, clothes, and enough music records to last for months provides enough evidence that Smith was intent on becoming a resident of this city. His knowledge of this city was bred through sheer determination and the firm belief that familiarity would come with time. So too did Smith’s images become more nuanced as he became more comfortable in his new surroundings.
The theory behind tourist photography, and with it Smith’s photography and my rephotography, dictates the immense gulf separating images that appear visually similar. For Amanda Stronza, “tourism can be an ideal context for studying issues of political economy, social change and development, natural resource management, and cultural identity and expression.” While the typical tourist spends a certain amount of money to travel, or be led, directly to a given vantage point from which to capture one or two photographs, Smith dedicated entire rolls to this same practice. I had a different task: to acquire the exact same image that Smith had produced. Although Smith’s *Pittsburgh Project* may not have adhered to Stronza’s conception of tourism, it does fit in perfectly with rephotography and some of its varied goals.

Any discussion of tourism as it relates to Smith’s practices must also be directed back to one’s self as a rephotographer. In essence, like a tourist attempting to obtain an image that exists in the public realm, one also turns a blind eye to anything unrelated to the images being repeated. Whereas there are only two instances identified of Smith repeating a view down to the exact spot, and several other views that could be categorized under the heading of “touristic,” there is not one image that has been produced here that could be termed wholly original. Instead, the onus is on creating images as close as possible to what Smith created fifty years ago. Regardless of what has occurred in the city, architecture, and environment in preceding years, the concern lies with the views that Smith observed through his camera lens. It is in the process and the desired results that separate others’ work from that of Smith’s. This is because for the

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rephotographer, they are not looking so much at the scene in front of them but at a printed image of that scene. This gaze is not directed so much at a three-dimensional view but instead towards a two-dimensional representation of that view. The difference between Smith and a tourist, then, is that whereas vacation views taken by a member of the public might be brought out for display or sequestered in a family photo album, Smith’s work was destined for a printed book, gallery walls, and museum exhibitions—that is, they are commercial and fine art.

It is this aspect of Smith’s work that can be difficult to understand. How exactly could a photographer of Smith’s stature knowingly choose to stand in a spot occupied by countless amateur photographers to look down at a small isolated neighborhood that has been all but forgotten or from the top of a mountain whose views have defined Pittsburgh for generations? Smith had a history of finding unique shooting positions even going so far as sustaining a concussion while documenting a day in the life of a soldier in the Army and suffering potentially life-threatening injuries from the effects of a mortar on Okinawa.

As a new wave of tourism theorists (and theory) emerge, tourist photography is being positioned as “performed rather than preformed and tourist photographers as framing as much as being framed.”

Discussing Smith in this context would give him the benefit of accepting his position as an outsider in Pittsburgh.

91 Jonas Larsen is one of the more prodigious authors on tourism studies today and addresses how photography fits into this area of study. His “Families Seen Sighseeing: Performativity of Tourist Photography.” Space and Culture 8.4 (2005): 416 is a good introduction to aspects of photography and performativity as they relate to tourism. Other venues for research include the Tourism Studies Working Group based at UC Berkeley and the journals Tourist Studies published by SAGE and Annals of Tourism Research from Elsevier. In particular, the
Just as Smith was in a position to act as a tourist in 1955, so this tradition continues fifty years later. The ideas behind tourism, though, go deeper than merely visiting and documenting unknown sites. Tourism studies attempts to probe the reasons why individuals create and seek out images with their cameras and how those images operate in various societies. Despite Smith’s stature within the photographic world, he was most certainly aware of the power that photographic images held with the viewing public. Whether it was his coverage of the Second World War, his multiple tenures with Life magazine or the iconic image of his children, Patrick and Juanita, in Walk from Paradise Garden, taken as a response to the horrors that he witnessed in the Pacific theater.

With tourism, several images stand out such as a series of views from atop Mount Washington (a location peppered with permanent scenic overlooks that has been utilized for a number of iconic images of Pittsburgh’s Golden Triangle) and inside an incline used to travel from the bottom of Mount Washington to the top. What is noteworthy is that the construction of these overlooks was actually captured by Smith in the spring of 1955.

Association of Social Anthropologists dedicated their 2007 conference to the theme of tourism studies. The proceedings can be found at www.theasa.org/conferences/asa07/asa07book.pdf.

92 A good general introduction to the rhetoric of photography within tourism studies is The Framed World: Tourism, Tourists and Photography edited by Mike Robinson and David Picard. In this interdisciplinary book, the editors weave the fields of anthropology, theology, history, cultural studies, music, and psychology to create a valuable discourse with which to view photography and tourism. Recognizing that photography carries agency in the pursuit of knowledge and the ownership or validation of sites, Robinson and Picard move beyond the private bounds of tourism to expose a public dialogue that is inherent in the photographer-subject transaction.
It is a view of Panther Hollow as seen from Schenley Bridge, however, that epitomizes this concept, although it is not readily apparent at first sight. Although the act of rephotography requires patience and attention to detail when identifying vantage points and producing an image, this particular image was easier to replicate due to the nature of its creation. Like many vistas that dot the American landscape, Schenley Bridge is home to a scenic outlook in the form of a protruding apse-like structure at the north end of the bridge. Smith had simply moved into this space to view a predefined vista much like tourists (and locals) have been doing for the one hundred twelve years that this bridge has existed. Thus, while the image is fairly banal in that it pictures a small hamlet nestled at the bottom of a valley and bisected by Boundary Street and Yarrow Way and train tracks, Smith has instilled additional layers of meaning by virtue of his purposeful vantage point.

This set of images depicts a tiny neighborhood known as Panther Hollow (for its close proximity to the University of Pittsburgh, although it is at the bottom of a valley at the foot of Carnegie Mellon University) as seen from a scenic outlook located on the eastern end of Scheneley Bridge. In the same way that Smith sought to portray the hidden side of Pittsburgh symbolically, Panther Hollow is quite literally a hidden neighborhood, even according to the standards of Pittsburgh. Resting in the shadow of Scheneley Bridge, Panther Hollow is only visible from the vantage point of a pedestrian crossing the bridge and only accessible from one road.
Despite the railroad tracks and roads present in the composition, the photographer, and viewer for that matter, remain untethered to what lies below, almost as if one were looking down on a model railroad scene. The inclusion of Panther Hollow as a rephotograph in this survey is a testament to the resiliency of the city itself and the residents of this secluded enclave to persevere despite the limitations placed upon them. When viewed alongside a pair of images discussed in the Palimpsest section, *The Polish Army War Veterans Home*, a comparison can be drawn from the distinctions between the architectural solidity of the Veterans Home and the natural progression of Panther
Hollow. Whereas one urban building’s use, although not its cosmetic appearance, changed regularly for 100 years, a natural valley’s remoteness ensured the future would not easily leave its mark.

Like many of the views present from Pittsburgh’s Mount Washington and its overlooks, this view is also dictated by a pre-determined vantage point in the form of a small deck protruding from the sidewalk. Placed on either side of the bridge at both ends, this is the only lookout that offers a view of Panther Hollow although the intended purpose was to look up to Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh rather than down into Panther Hollow. The two decks on the northern side both look toward CMU’s Scaife Hall, Robert Engineering Hall, and the architecturally distinctive Hamerschlag Hall. While the converging lines of the railroad lines are predominant in Smith’s image, the current photograph depicts the passage of time through the growth of trees that were not even visible in Smith’s image. In particular, there is a yew tree that had not even been planted during Smith’s time in Pittsburgh, yet today matches the height of the houses between which it currently stands. The similarities rest in the road that extends from the middle of the image through the top. As one image transitions into another, it is almost impossible to differentiate them despite the variety of cars that populate each of the images.

The next three sets of images depict the Golden Triangle, yet are almost binary opposites of each other. While two are taken from the top of Mount Washington on the South Side during the day, the other is from the North Side taken during the night. Depicting the same subject matter from various points of view and times of day help to
explain why Pittsburgh was, and remains to this day, a city that is capable of taking on multiple roles. As if emphasizing the varied nature of Pittsburgh’s topology, each set of images offers opposing views of the city and its relative density. They also point toward the unique nature of Pittsburgh’s geography whereby the city can be looked down upon from two very different locations on opposite sides of the city that nonetheless produce similar views because of the triangular nature of the downtown.

Fig. 5:2. Terrain Map of Downtown Pittsburgh
With the first set taken from high atop Mount Washington, Smith could gaze into the deep valley that contains the Golden Triangle in addition to the North Side. While the Gateway Centers in 1955 stand apart from the rest of Pittsburgh, it is easy to see how they have been fully consumed and disappear into the greater urban fabric today. With the addition of the Hilton Hotel in 1959, Four Gateway Center in 1960, and the Gateway Towers apartment building in 1964, the original three cruciform-shaped Gateway towers assume the role of ordinary office towers as opposed to the greater role that their names belie. Even Allegheny General Hospital that once anchored Allegheny City is now dwarfed, at least photographically, by a cell phone tower built atop Troy Hill.

Printing this image in a highly elongated vertical (portrait) format gave Smith the ability to emphasize his position high above this city.
Furthermore, his telephoto lens simultaneously compressed the man-made environment composed of skyscrapers and office buildings by creating a deep depth of field where all of the objects, regardless of distance from the lens, appear to be located on the same focal plane. Fifty years later, the Gateway Towers have receded deeper into the urban fabric as the Hilton Hotel (now the Wyndham Hotel) and other office buildings have all taken up residence at the western most part of the Point. So too with the cell phone antenna
towering above Troy Hill on the North Side—an object that both punctuates the landscape and dates this image.

However, after a closer inspection of this pair of images, the grade of the hill, and the positioning of the shovel and/or worker, it is thought that he was standing closer to the sidewalk along Grandview Ave. as the tourist overlook was only then being constructed. This was finally confirmed by comparing a series of images printed for the 1959 Photography Annual along with images held at the Carnegie Museum of Art. His movements were then choreographed as he roamed the top of this hill, moving from one end where he photographed the North Side to the other end where he photographed the South Side.

Then, shifting his feet slightly and turning ninety degrees, Smith photographed the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad Terminal building, which has now become Station Square. However, as noted earlier, Smith moved a few meters away to the east, principally because the overlook did not exist yet.
Fig. 5:4. *Mount Washington Overlook*, W. Eugene Smith, 1955, Vol. 1, Pg. 71
Although Station Square is now a shopping mall filled with restaurants and nightclubs, it was once an important hub for transportation, for both human and
commodities cargo, in the city. Although these buildings have been completely erased from the landscape, the entirety of the waterfront area on the South Side was once filled with steel works and the requisite structures for processing and transporting steel across the country. Framing the depot is a series of rail and automobile bridges (from foreground to back, they are the Smithfield Street and Liberty, with the rest of the South Side and Oakland in the background). Both of these examples were then confirmed by looking through his contact sheets at the CCP and finding the relative placement of images. Even though this series fits in with the theme of tourism, a performative aspect exists and this could only be discerned through the act of rephotography.

With the other pair, Smith positioned himself looking down over Dutchtown, an area that no longer exists, in name or in buildings, with the 6th Street Bridge joining the North Side with the Downtown. Merchant Street is running from the foreground to the middle ground and Martindale Street is running across the picture frame. However, the most remarkable feature is the Koppers Building, an Art Deco structure built for an industrial manufacturing firm, with it lighted pyramidal roof that is complemented by the full moon rising behind it.
Fig. 5:6. Monument Hill, W. Eugene Smith, 1955, Vol. 1, Pg. 27
In 1955, this area and the neighborhood behind it (until 1908, the North Side was known as Allegheny City when it was annexed by the city of Pittsburgh as a means of
collecting income and property taxes) still possessed some of the largest mansions within the city and was very much in the center of activity as compared to its present state on the edge of development. Beginning in the mid 1960s, this entire area, formerly known as “Millionaire’s Row” was torn down in order to build the Community College of Allegheny campus. Included among these mansions that were torn down was the so-called “House with Eyes” that Smith photographed. Besides the extensive undergrowth and fence and the US Steel Tower, the Gulf Tower is still visible and recognizable, a visual beacon of the downtown.

Fifty years later, the view was somewhat obstructed by a wire fence and tree growth. Now, only two of the former landmarks are visible, the aforementioned Koppers Building and the Byham Theater. The main street that had existed has given way to a mixed-use building that contains the headquarters for the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review newspaper and the I-279 overpass that effectively divided the space into two. Further behind is the Pittsburgh Pirates’ PNC Park and towering high above everything else on the Golden Triangle is Pittsburgh’s tallest building, the US Steel Building. Adjacent to the community college campus is Allegheny Center, an indoor shopping mall constructed in the early 1960s. During construction, more than 518 buildings were razed to make way for the shopping center, apartments, and townhouses. Directly below Monument Hill is where Three Rivers Stadium stood, the last building constructed during Renaissance I. Where Smith captured a neighborhood and warehouses, the Urban Redevelopment Authority saw dilapidated buildings on valuable land that it purchased

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for a combined $26 million in federal and municipal funds.\textsuperscript{94} Today, this area is a parking lot servicing PNC Park, Heinz Field, and commuters to downtown.

Here I used Google Maps in order to pinpoint the site of this photograph. The 6th Street Bridge, Byham Theater and distinctive pyramidal roofline of the Gulf Tower are all visible from an elevated perspective taken from what had been Memorial Hill on Pittsburgh’s North Side. Unfortunately, this park and the neighborhood below no longer exists with the entire foreground of the image disappearing underneath a series of parking lots, hotels, and sports and entertainment venues. By utilizing Google, much as today’s tourists do, one is able to look at a satellite view of the city and draw a vector from the Byham Theater through the 6th Street Bridge, which leads directly to a large parking lot on the campus of the Community College of Allegheny County.

Fig. 5:8. Google Maps screenshot showing sightlines from Monument Hill/CCAC to Byham Theater and Gulf Tower

With the theme of tourism covered, we have the groundwork required laid for the continued study of rephotography. The paths that Smith covered in Pittsburgh in his role as a tourist enabled him to gain a broad, and often times, a birds-eye view of the city. The next section dealing with palimpsest takes a closer and more detailed look at more of his images.
Chapter 6

Palimpsest

The term “palimpsest” originated with the study of medieval manuscripts and was coined during the nineteenth century, but its traits are readily apparent to anyone willing to investigate the rephotographic artifacts in front of them. Although it was originally used to define a unique characteristic of parchment paper—the ability to repeatedly erase, write over, and observe or even possibly read multiple layers of writing on one sheet, this term can also be applied to other instances of translucency or transparency. This applies whether the translucency is with an inanimate object as much as it does to a person. As parchment, itself an organic material, was a precious commodity, it was often reused, but the original text could rarely be fully erased. One could then think about the manuscript not as a document frozen in time, but one that is moving fluidly through multiple histories. The concept of a palimpsest, then, is a peculiar one that lies beneath the surface of rephotography, yet whose traits must have been known to Smith. Indeed, some of

95 “palimpsest.” Chicago School of Media Theory. N.d. Web. 16 Feb. 2014. A useful primer on the historiography of the palimpsest is found on the Chicago School of Media Theory website as part of the University of Chicago. It introduces examples ranging from medieval manuscripts to architecture and the Internet while tracing the historiography of the term. It also contains a brief bibliography.

96 For a practical example of visualizing the palimpsest, I exhibited two artworks based on Smith’s Polish Army War Veterans Home at the Space 101 Gallery in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in April 2009. One piece was a digital projection composed of 300 unique frames, yet created from only two original images. The second was a wall-mounted installation of 100 sets of photographic images printed on both paper and acetate. Although my intention was to make manifest in a physical form the concept of a palimpsest, the nature of my video and physical works spoke more of differences in media than as partners in communication. While the digital projection was the most clear way of making the palimpsest visible as fifty years of time dissolved over the course of five minutes, it was the prints that worked better on a conceptual level. Although composed of one paper print and one transparency, the combination of these images produced a third image in the form of a shadow that I would name a palimpsest.
his most poignant images depict scenes that have been erased both on paper and in the physical world.

The idea of parchment remaining unattached from any particular period of time can also be connected to its own literal makeup, that of calfskin or to be more precise—dermis. When we think of dermis, or our own skin, we realize its own tactility and innate nature to heal itself after being damaged. It is this ability that lends itself to the concept of rephotography that is most interesting. Just as this survey is composed of multiple layers, so too is human skin with the epidermis, dermis, and subcutaneous layers. Each layer, whether photographic or skin, builds upon the others and adds a new dimension to them. There is also another dimension to this discussion in that parchment (as a material) and photography have reached their given end states, while skin and photographed scenes are most certainly dynamic entities. It is from these relationships: the living and the dead, stasis and change, dynamism and stillness, and translucency and opaqueness that a more lively idea of palimpsest will emerge.

Thus, photography, as a form of writing (with light), is a perfect candidate for examination. As opposed to appropriation or the simple act of copying a former photograph, rephotography can now be seen as a form of reuse—the reuse of another photographer’s vantage point or subject matter. This treatment allows for an original approach to studying rephotography by acknowledging the presence of at least two unique images that constantly inform, contradict, and compete against one another for the viewer’s attention. An example of this would be the lenticular cover to Peter Feldstein’s *The Oxford Project* that formed three images depending on how the viewer tilts the
bookcover: an original, a rephotograph, and a liminal palimpsest. Although it is also possible to combine photographs digitally or by hand to create one composite image, their effect is ultimately based upon the layering of discrete images. Every change in opacity, or any other variable, necessarily brings out qualities that are otherwise unseen. At the same time, photography can also expose the palimpsest in individual photographs whether it was with the Polish Army War Veterans Home as we will see next, or the demolition of a former train station on the North Side. Whether it is through the layering of photographs and rephotographs or the evaluation of a single image, the palimpsest is a valuable tool for tracing change in the urban landscape.

In 1955, the building that Smith photographed, The Polish Army War Veterans Home (4020 Butler Ave. at the Corner of Fisk Street), was still being used as a retirement home and social club.

\footnote{Feldstein, \textit{The Oxford Project}, 2010.}
As a hub for immigrants, Pittsburgh had a large number of Poles that swore allegiance to both the United States and Poland following the outbreak of World War I. This “Veterans Home” served the Polish soldiers returning from European service in both the U.S. and French armies. On the particular afternoon that Smith happened by though, it was rented out by a newlywed couple who happened to be leaning out of the second floor window with another member of the wedding party. Fifty years later, it has retained its imposing entranceway, but it is now vacant. At various times through the intervening years it provided a home for a bar, a fabric store, and even a photographer’s studio. The
window and ornate doorway still exist, but something peculiar has happened to the sign above the door. It now reads “Telephone Building,” but with a discerning eye, one can tell that this text was cast into the concrete of the lintel, and it was in fact the “Telephone Building” before it was transformed into a Polish social club and retirement home. When the building changed roles, or at least its name, and back again is not known, yet with the aid of rephotography, it is now possible to visualize this shifting of the urban landscape in both still and moving images.

At first glance, the two images of The Polish Army War Veterans Home, appear to be relatively straightforward—the monumental doorway, window, and even telephone wires have remained unchanged for more than fifty years. Only the wedding party, or lack thereof, has seemed to disappear. However, one significant item has changed which could in and of itself be considered the subject matter of the entire image, the sign inlaid above the door. While it was known as the Polish Army War Veterans Home during Smith’s time in Pittsburgh, the building is currently vacant, although it has at times also played host to a bar, an antiques store, and even a photographer’s studio. From the rephotograph, though, it becomes clear that this sign was simply covering another title carved into the actual stone work: Telephone Building. The preservation of the title clearly plays an important role for this building and for the neighborhood. What has happened in this example is that instead of the erosion of a physical object, its original purpose has actually been reclaimed.

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When applied to this image, the concept of the palimpsest takes on a unique role in that it took approximately fifty years to realize that there was a prior history connected to this building. Also, due to the very nature of commercial real estate, buildings naturally take on different roles, yet this building, with its social and civic significance including the wedding party leaning out of the window, adds a degree of nostalgia to the scene. Examples of this are found elsewhere in Pittsburgh including the Heinz Lofts that are a part of the Heinz Factory that is still a working factory, the Cork Lofts in a former cork manufacturing building, and The Brewhouse and Mine Factory, two artist studios that are housed in a former brewery and a factory for mine safety devises. The palimpsest in this case is only fully realized in printed form, for only one sign can ever be seen at one time. What emerges, then, is that the architecture of the building, even for a relative newcomer, defined the building. It is the unique ability of photography to condense years, decades, and even centuries onto individual sheets of paper. The difficulty, however is that the resulting image is only ever capable of showing one particular moment at a time (and a moment of the photographer’s choosing, at that).

A similar case from Klett’s oeuvre deals with the Comstock quartz-mining operation located in Virginia City, Nevada. From his original rephotograph taken in 1979, it appears as though this area is a virgin territory of rolling hills and tall grass. The second rephotograph is almost indistinguishable from the first as the geography and flora of the region has remained consistent. Without these contemporary images, the viewer would have no idea that this was an environmentally destructive strip mining operation.
throughout the last half of the nineteenth century as photographed by Timothy O’Sullivan in two different views in 1868.

The palimpsest suggests that perception of change can move forward and backward through the passage of time regardless of the actions occurring around or within it. What might appear authentic or true could be a cloak for the “real.” What could be understood as authentic in Smith’s images could very well be lost while viewing the rephotographs. Similarly, despite being marked as “Telephone Building,” the purpose for the building was extinguished long before it was taken over by the Polish Army War Veterans. For this building, it took a few decades before it could, at least in name, be reclaimed from its previous uses.99

Fig. 6:2. *Virginia City, NV*, Timothy O’Sullivan, 1868

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99 The practice of revealing a building’s previous use is not limited to this one example. In the Mexican War Street neighborhood of Pittsburgh, there are two facades of houses with the labels of “Beer Distributor” and “Grocery Store,” although neither of these has existed for decades.
Once these hills were exhausted of their ore, the mining company completely dismantled its operation and moved to a new site. Over time, the man-made marks on the landscape
are simply no match for the encroaching landscape that remains still once it reaches stasis.

It is at this point where the concept of a palimpsest can take on more than one meaning. While all rephotographs exhibit this quality to some extent, in that all rephotographs are composed of at least two distinct time periods, there are a few rephotographs in particular that appear to take this on as their main subject matter in the physical world. However, while it appears as though there is a past and a present moment depicted (by virtue of the photographic medium), both time periods captured are of the past. The transition between these two images is what produces an orchestrated palimpsest as the viewer simultaneously observes the passage of fifty years of history with the overlaying of two images.

It is also possible, however, for a photographer to adopt the palimpsest as his or her subject through advance knowledge of a specific scene’s future development. The difficulty in this is taking the notion of the palimpsest from the realm of an idea to a physical, spatial, and visual representation. These scenes differ from all others in that the original photographer’s main subject is removed in favor of the visual evidence of change. Included among these images are the Polish Army War Veterans Home, an image of the now demolished Syria Mosque, and a view of the Gateway Center from Mount Washington. In these examples, it is possible to stand where Smith would have stood and see elements from various periods of Pittsburgh’s history intersecting and melding together.
The next set of images is from the 6th Street Bridge known as the Roberto Clemente Bridge after the Pittsburgh Pirates Hall of Famer and one of three bridges connecting the downtown triangle district to PNC Baseball Park and the rest of the North Side of Pittsburgh. In Smith’s image, a parade was occurring with a Shriner’s clown dressed as a policeman interacting with a group of young children. While the bridge remains essentially unchanged, with only a newer model street lamp and attached flowerpots, the interest lies in the view of the background of the rephotograph. In 1956, the top of Mt. Washington was clearly visible with St. Mary of the Mount Roman Catholic Church situated squarely on top of the mountain. A view such as this served to turn the viewer’s attention toward the mountain instead of from the mountain. Occupying the middle ground are One, Two, and Three Gateway Centers (The cruciform buildings which were all built between 1950 and 1953 as part of the original Pittsburgh Renaissance, which is now in its third iteration).
Fig. 6:5. *Shriner’s Parade*, W. Eugene Smith, 1955, Vol. 1, Pg. 139

Fig. 6:6. *Sixth Street Bridge*, Matthew Conboy, 2008
The development ended in 1960 with the completion of the Pittsburgh Hilton (now the Wyndham Hotel) and Four Gateway Center and have effectively blocked any meaningful view of Mt. Washington from the 6th Street Bridge. Later additions that are visible were a glass-walled, high-rise apartment building and a requisite above-ground parking garage, which further flattened the view into the heart of downtown Pittsburgh.

There is a sense of nostalgia with the *Shriner’s Parade on the 6th Street Bridge* for what is in effect a seemingly small town event. Within the frame, a disjunction exists between the Shriner in circus clown makeup and the young African-American children living in a city that still has a degree of racial tension. As the past gives way to the present, the sight of Mt. Washington disappears as two additional Gateway Centers emerge. So too does the downtown area merge into a series of parking garages and apartment buildings that occupy the prime real estate on the edges of the river. In turning what used to be public space (and their representative views) into a private commodity, Pittsburgh (as a political entity) was mortgaging the future of its citizens for the sake of contemporary urban renewal. This particular transformation, then, includes both a civic and a social component as the municipal government expands its footprint on the Golden Triangle and formerly accepted behaviors become taboo.

For an even greater visual effect, one should look no further than the images of the Syria Mosque—the former home of the Pittsburgh Symphony and a popular live music venue. Included among these are at least two shots of the sculptural lions that framed the entrance as well an image of an altar or choir boy running from the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial to his mother’s car with the Mosque in the background. For close
to eighty years the Mosque provided a venue for musical performers and a unique architectural backdrop for Oakland. However, it was demolished in 1991, to many people’s surprise, with the resulting space being used as a parking lot. The transition between Smith’s and my images provides a powerful commentary on the role that urban development plays with regard to the micro scale of individual blocks and buildings. The palimpsest in this case is made concrete by the knowledge that buried somewhere below this parking lot are the foundations of a building whose razing would have been incomprehensible in 1955.

These images present a view across Bigelow Boulevard from a side exit of the Soldiers and Sailor Hall in Oakland, less than one block from the former site of Forbes Field. In Smith’s image, a choirboy runs down a set of stairs at the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall opposite from the Syria Mosque. As will be seen later in this chapter with a statue of Honus Wagner, even with the radical change in scenery, there is still an opportunity to observe the results of movement and change.
With the combination of the disappearance of the Mosque (the true subject of Smith’s image), the enlarging of Bigelow Blvd., a dramatic shift in the aesthetic of the automobiles, and a subtle movement of the artillery shell at the foot of the stairs, it is nonetheless easy to imagine these elements in the current rephotographs. In this case, there is still enough of an anchor in the 2008 rephotograph to enable the viewer to imagine the Mosque in its former location. Even so, this pair of images only works because of the wide angle of view that introduces a greater amount of foreground than would normally be expected.
In this instance, the image of the young choirboy is a prime example. Although there are a few minor changes, including the stairs that the boy is running down, the artillery shell planted in the grass, and the expansion of Bigelow Boulevard, the viewer should have little difficulty accepting these two images to be from the same geographical source. Much like the Shriner’s parade example, there is a degree of nostalgia present here as well although it is directed here at buildings as opposed to people or an event. Of course, this same scene has played out countless times in Pittsburgh as old buildings were demolished and new structures built (or not built) on top of them. The Lower Hill District (the Municipal Arena, affectionately known as the Igloo), Forbes Field (the University of Pittsburgh’s Hillman Library), and the area below Memorial Hill (I-279) are other reminders of progress that have been utilized for radically different purposes.
Fig. 6:8. *Breed Street*, W. Eugene Smith, 1955, Vol. 3, Pg. 118

Fig. 6:9. *Breed Street*, Matthew Conboy, 2008
As part of Smith’s series on street signs, Breed Street presents a closely cropped view of the second floor window of a house on Breed Street (1311 Breed St.) and is a perfect example of being chosen for its peculiar name. Other streets chosen for this reason include Hamlet and Ophelia, Pride, Love, and most famously, Dream Street. Fifty years ago, the street sign was inlaid within the brickwork of the house resembling the street signs of Rome and other European cities, and there was a set of fans in the window. Today, this sign, like many others, has been relegated to an unadorned pole on the corner of the street, where it intersects with Uxor Way.\(^{100}\)

Another point of departure that arose from photographing street signs, to which this image belongs, is the lack of decoration or differentiation of contemporary street signs as opposed to their older models. Street signs inlaid in building walls have virtually been replaced from all street corners with the exception of all but the oldest buildings. Even those signs that have remained on street corners have changed radically as the typography and graphic design of the 1950s gradually gave way to the requirements imposed by local, regional, and national transportation officials. These changes will be made apparent in the following series of images.

The next series is taken from William Penn Place looking south towards 6\(^{th}\) Ave. Taken just a few hundred feet from the next series that is on Strawberry Way, these current images look right past the iconic Alcoa (Aluminum Corporation of America) Headquarters (now known as the Regional Enterprise Tower) and instead focus on a

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\(^{100}\) I was fortunate that Breed Street is only five blocks long and this is a corner house so I was able to narrow its precise location down even further with the aid of Google Street View. The real work began once I drove to Breed Street and began comparing the windows and literally counting brickwork in Smith’s image to the houses that were in front of me.
unique assemblage of street signs (Tow Away Zone, No Stopping, Wm. Penn Pl., and One Way) in front of Mellon Square Park before finally resting on 3 Mellon Center (also known as 525 William Penn Place), the home at one time of Mellon Bank and the U.S. Steel Corporation and the flag pole that lies in front of it.
Fig. 6:10. *Strawberry Way*, W. Eugene Smith, 1955, Vol. 3, Pg. 25

Fig. 6:11. *Strawberry Way*, Matthew Conboy, 2008
Like much of the surrounding architecture, the park was completed in 1955, the Alcoa building in 1952, 525 William Penn Place in 1951, the first three Gateway Centers in 1953, followed by the Hilton Hotel in 1959. It could be argued that these eight years did more to change the look of the city than the previous two hundred years combined.

An important aside is that in the nomination form for National Historic District recognition for the Central Downtown district, Martin Aurand, an author and architectural librarian at the University of Pittsburgh, writing for the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation (PHLF) wrote that “while the land clearance and new construction principles of the Renaissance might today be questioned rather than praised for their impact on pre-existing structures, the Alcoa Building and Mellon Square remain as unquestionably positive contributions to downtown Pittsburgh.”¹⁰¹ This document was critical for the preservation of the downtown district and its very existence is evidence for the behavior of planning commissions to continually build, tear down, and rebuild regardless of the historical nature of the buildings involved or the fact that the structures being discussed were less than thirty years old. It is in the final paragraph of this form where Aurand most closely conforms to Smith’s notions not only of the city, but of his entire Pittsburgh Project. Aurand writes:

The Pittsburgh Central Downtown Historic District then, is a district of independent physical statements which share a significance to the historical development of Pittsburgh and a boldness of architectural conceptions. The district and its component parts remain crucial to

Pittsburgh’s institutional and commercial well-being and the stability of its characteristic physical environment.\textsuperscript{102}

Aurand’s National Historic District nomination form expresses his view, and confirms Smith’s beliefs, that the idea of Pittsburgh is much more than the existence of any one building, or photograph, and is instead created from the collection of buildings, neighborhoods, and series of images. These images make clear the impact that objects as banal as street signs have on the urban landscape. Whereas the buildings and the park have barely changed structurally, an element as small as street signs has seemingly changed the entire atmosphere of the scene. Compared to their contemporary counterparts, the signs of the 1950s appear as ad-hoc works of public art. As a result of the adage that “form follows function,” and the resulting banishment of any decoration, the street views of Pittsburgh, or any modern American city has been forever altered. More importantly, the independent and ethnic nature of Pittsburgh’s many neighborhoods has been reduced by virtue of the now homogenous signs.

As yet another example from Smith’s “Street Sign” series shows, the image known as Loyal Way, at the corner of Loyal Way and Milbridge Street, the placement of these signs created a unique mark on the landscape.

\textsuperscript{102} Aurand, 8.
Fig. 6:12. *Loyal Way*, W. Eugene Smith, 1955, Vol. 3, Pg. 119

Fig. 6:13. *Loyal Way*, Matthew Conboy, 2008
These views have now been turned into an unframed, undifferentiated, standard street scene that says nothing of its placement in Pittsburgh. The rooflines, gutters, power lines and telephone poles have lingered unaltered in this visibly stable neighborhood. Even the sidewalks, which show a seam or row of weeds growing down the middle in Smith’s image appear as though they have never been touched. Only the road shows some aging, with years or decades of small mends visible in the current image. The interesting thing about this set of images is that despite the appearance or disappearance of several trees and cars, this was one of the most difficult shots to line up correctly.\footnote{103}

The final example from the “Street Sign” series is Freeland Street at the corner of Freeland St. and Milbridge St., less than one block and 180° from the previous photograph.\footnote{103 Only after repeated attempts to photograph this street was I finally able to obtain the image I had been searching for by positioning myself on top of the roof of my car parked in a person’s driveway.}
Once again, the street sign in Smith’s image provides an anchor, both conceptually and literally, for a group of six children looking or waiting expectantly for something to happen. Although the wooden fence in the foreground is gone, the trees and houses all still exist, albeit with fifty years of growth and aging. Even the telephone pole has remained in exactly the same spot, although the sidewalk has been reformed at the corner presumably in order to conform to ADA requirements. The most interesting feature, though, is the remainder of the sidewalk. Every square of concrete in the image can be matched up with one in Smith’s photograph. Even the cracks in the sidewalk have remained frozen in time for more than fifty years. So too has the spot where the street
sign once stood stayed unchanged. A little further back, behind the pole, a crack in the sidewalk and a manhole cover also show no signs of ever having been touched. During the rephotography process, it is elements such as these that create interest not only for the viewer but also for the photographer.

With the examples above, the theme of palimpsest can be viewed as being multifaceted itself. In some cases, there is an integral need to compare and contrast the original image and the rephotograph in order to expose the palimpsest. In other cases, though, Smith appears to have tackled the theme of palimpsest head on as his subject matter. Either way, the viewer has the ability to observe the changes that have occurred in those specific scenes. Much like with the theme of tourism, palimpsest is rooted in Smith’s movements, by car and foot, through the city of Pittsburgh. That relationship to travel and movement will be expanded in the following section dealing with performance.
Chapter 7

Performance

Performance and performativity converge in the practice of both rephotography and mapping. In the words of Gillian Rose and Nicky Gregson, “Performance—what individual subjects do, say, ‘act-out’—and performativity—the citational practices which reproduce and/or subvert discourse and which enable and discipline subjects and their performances—are inherently connected […].”\(^{104}\) Three contemporary artists who have embraced the intersection created by performance and mapping are Catherine D’Ignazio’s *It Takes 154,000 Breaths to Evacuate Boston* (2007) and the collective Multiplicity’s *The Road Map* (2003). D’Ignazio ran more than one hundred miles worth of evacuation routes in Boston that were created in response to the events of 9/11. In a different political vein, Multiplicity drove two different routes in Israel, one with an Israeli passport holder and the other with a Palestinian worker in order to see how political conditions shape the temporality of travel. Both artists essentially began with a mapping project and ended with a pedestrian or driver’s view of the landscape of politics. With cartography, Francis Alys’ *When Faith Moves Mountains* (2002) is most striking in both scale and scope.\(^{105}\) Employing five hundred volunteers, they moved a sand dune in Peru approximately four inches over the course of a day. What was accomplished with

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\(^{105}\) The three preceding examples were included in “Experimental Geography,” a travelling exhibition curated by Nato Thompson and focused on contemporary forms of mapping and cartography and included a total of 18 artists. Nato Thompson, Curator. *Experimental Geography: Radical Approaches to Landscape, Cartography, and Urbanism*. Carnegie Mellon University Miller Gallery, Pittsburgh, 2009.
this action was a permanent alteration of what amounted to a transient geographical element. As with other conceptual artworks, the idea behind the work takes precedence over the creation of any physical remnant or object.

One’s performance, as a photographer following in Smith’s footsteps, constitute both a performative practice and objects born from a performance. It is precisely this performative act that unmasks Smith’s actions by way of plotting his movements. My movements, and any rephotographer’s movements, are based solely on the path traversed by the original photographer. The movements of the rephotographer become performative because they are defined and bound by a former photographer’s movements and not simply an unconscious act. The movements are as closely scripted as any choreography in dance or theatre and scrutinized to a degree that does not exist in other art forms. Whereas the score, script, and screenplay in traditional performance-based practices are exemplars that can necessarily be modified, the original photograph that provides the model in rephotography cannot be reinterpreted without altering the relationship between the two images.

The performance-based aspect of rephotography (and the rephotographer), as opposed to the actions of photography (or the photographer) itself, can only be gleaned post facto. One would posit that there is not one, but at least three instances of performance occurring—that of Smith (in addition to the subjects that he photographed), myself, and then that which occurs during preliminary research used when reconstructing Smith’s movements using virtual and web-based tools like Google Maps and Street View. By virtue of the way in which rephotography works, these three moments of
performance are intimately tied together such that one cannot function independently of the others.

In discussing the relationship of photography to tourism studies, Jonas Larsen draws on performance theory to analyze tourist behaviors. He writes:

Normally, photography is seen as a means to an end (photographs), but the play aspect turns things on its head: photography can now also be an end in itself. The play aspect shows how photography can be a source of pleasure and creativity itself, and this explains its performances.¹⁰⁶

Turning our attention to Smith, and his close to eight hundred contact sheets, a remarkable amount of “play” occurred as he made his way through the city over the course of two years as opposed to the two weeks in which he was originally given to work.

The first instance of a performance occurred while photographing the First Presbyterian Church on Sixth Ave. (Fig. 4:46). After photographing the front façade from a set of stairs leading from the sidewalk, I recalled that Smith had also photographed a bricklayer standing across the street from the Duquesne Club. After visiting the site, I discovered Smith had turned his body 180 degrees in order to photograph the bricklayer (Fig. 4:50). Then, within a few meters, Smith had again photographed the Duquesne Club, this time from directly across Sixth Ave. (Fig. 4:48). This is also true with Smith’s images of the South Side from Mount Washington. Smith turned 45 degrees in order to make what would at first sight appear to be a completely different composition (Fig. 4:57) for St. Michael’s Church.

Both of these examples were then confirmed by studying Smith’s contact sheets from the days in question (Figs. 4:53). From both sets of negatives, I confirmed that one scene immediately preceded the second view. Perhaps this had to do with Smith’s training as a photojournalist always on the lookout for unique points-of-view. It could also have emerged from a desire on Smith’s part to “fracture” the visual continuity of his essay or to enhance the disjunctive sense of Pittsburgh’s mountains, hills, valleys, and neighborhoods. Despite this evidence, these experiences could not have been gained from merely examining Smith’s images and contact sheets, but only from literally following in his footsteps. It was this realization that made the process of rephotography so exciting—that regardless of the years that had passed or the layers of soot that had been washed from stone walls, I was nonetheless (re)inhabiting Smith’s place in Pittsburgh.

As evidenced from Smith’s series of images taken on Sixth Ave., his views from Arlington Ave., or shots taken from Mount Washington, the concept of a performance takes on a particularly important role. By cropping and framing (both in the camera and darkroom), Smith could obtain two or three unique images without having to change his footing, and more importantly, without the viewer realizing this sleight of hand. Thus, the idea of a performance does not strictly belong to the rephotographic project shown here. As Richard Shusterman argues in “Photography as Performative Process,” with respect to the relative effortlessness of “snapping” a photograph:

The instantaneous act of shutter release likewise suggests that there is no
sustained duration of effort involved as one would expect in a performative process. These reasons, however, neglect the complex performative process that occurs before the shutter release and the camera’s ensuing mechanism of producing the photographic image. But that prior process—involving the mise-en-scène performative activity of the photographer and the posing subject—is necessary for achieving the desired optical image [...]\(^ {107}\)

While it could be argued that the examples of Sixth Ave., Arlington Ave., and Mount Washington are just accidental images created in a flurry of shutter clicks, these images all exist as finished prints which were then incorporated into the *Dream Street* exhibit. It leads me to believe that Smith was conscious of his movements and their meaning while he was photographing each of these scenes. Indeed, as David Davies argues in *Art as Performance*, an artwork (any artwork) is much more than just the physical object residing in a frame or on a pedestal. It is instead the sum of the entire performance of the artist that brought the work into existence. Davies is not simply reductive, though, as he refuses to claim that these artworks are only the products of these creative activities, but rather “intentionally guided generative performances that eventuate in contextualized structures or objects.”\(^ {108}\) To consider the ontology of specific artworks as encompassing these discreet movements makes “performance” a logical framework for investigating the nature of rephotography.

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The very act of rephotography is based on subverting traditional discourses. In appropriating the view of a former photographer, the rephotographer recreates two unique aspects of art making—the movements of the previous photographer and the image created by that photographer. But it is not the only artistic practice based on reproducing a former work of art. After all, rephotography’s entire purpose is to emulate an existing image. It is simultaneously creating a new and unique work of art at the same time that it is directly referencing a former work. Referring to images plays an important role not only in reading the past but projecting the future. Thus, the continuum that is initiated by rephotography extends far beyond (and behind) the simple comparison of two images. However, it does have a deep foundation within the history of art.

In particular were the “how” and “why” of framing scenes or objects. Thankfully, almost all of Smith’s contact sheets (prints displaying an entire film roll’s work on one piece of paper) survive and are kept in several repositories. From these, it is possible to recreate his exact movements and movements that he made with his camera and body in order to capture the scenes in front of him. For more information regarding the shooting of this project, see Appendix B. Fortunately, these contact sheets present the physical locations of images and a temporal timeline to recreate his exact movements around Pittsburgh. Below is a contact sheet from Pride Street in the Hill District and illustrates how Smith moved around a stationary street sign pole in order to capture the image he was waiting for.
What at first sight appears to be an anonymous young man reading at a table piled high with books turns out to be Leon Miller, one of Smith’s many assistants in Pittsburgh. Once the contact sheet is inspected, it can be seen that this is but one of twenty frames, out of the thirty-four frames on this contact sheet, taken from the exact
same vantage point, directly opposite of Miller, with Smith shifting ever so slightly in each frame.\textsuperscript{109}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{Contact Sheet E5-R177, Vol. 2, Pg. 76}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{109} W. Eugene Smith, \emph{Contact Sheet}, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
So too does Miller shift from leaning on his right hand and then his left, glancing at books on either side of him, and finally wearing his glasses or holding them in his hand. Whether Miller was moving of his own accord or being directed by Smith is debatable, but their working relationship cannot be denied. The only missing element from this artifact is the mention of time, although the consistency of the people seated in the background would suggest that only a short amount of time has passed from beginning to end. Like many instances in the history of photography, the image that was finalized by Smith turned out to be the penultimate one and the last one in landscape format.

Moving back to Smith’s individual images, with his penchant for photographing in Oakland, home to two major universities, Forbes Field (the home of the Pittsburgh Pirates from 1909-1971), and a number of smaller colleges, it is no surprise that he also turned his attention toward the Carnegie Library, Carnegie Mellon University, and their immediate surroundings. Contrary to the business oriented downtown and industrially centered South Side, Oakland provides its residents with their own main street on Forbes Ave. as well as access to some of the most highly regarded institutes of higher education in the region.

In the first example, Smith positioned himself near the Stephen Collins Foster memorial statue located in front of the Carnegie Library main branch. Although it is the largest of the Carnegie Free Libraries in the area, it does not have the distinction of being the first.\footnote{The honor of the “first” library is up for debate as both Braddock, Pennsylvania, a company town located just outside of Pittsburgh where Andrew Carnegie owned a steel mill and the North Side’s Allegheny branch lay claim to that distinction depending on whether consideration is given to the laying of a cornerstone (Braddock) or completion (Allegheny City).}
Fig. 7:3. *Stephen Collins Foster Memorial Statue*, W. Eugene Smith, 1955, Vol. 1, Pg. 99

Fig. 7:4. *Stephen Collins Foster Memorial Statue*, Matthew Conboy, 2008
Taken from a sidewalk on Forbes Ave., the library is just visible beyond the limbs of a row of trees, and the park and lawn are crowded during this early spring day. Little has changed in the contemporary view, including the flower garden, benches, and trees, with the exception that the library has shed its smoky edifice. The only permanent element that has changed is the restoration of the façade of the library to remove decades of pollution and coal smoke.

Smith also photographed the Mary Schenley Memorial Fountain located across the street from the previous image and in front of the Henry Clay Frick Fine Arts Building on the edge of the University of Pittsburgh campus. Due to the close cropping of this image, there is very little that has changed with the exception of black and white children playing in the water together. This is remarkable as even today, Pittsburgh is known for its racial problems that have persisted over the decades. Despite having the water turned off, the Oakland branch of the Carnegie Library is still visible in the rephotograph’s background and the fountain remains in exactly the same condition as it did fifty years before. With the close proximity to Forbes Field and the attendant fans, this would have been a high traffic area during the summer months although it remains fairly quiet today.
Fig. 7:5. *Mary Schenely Fountain*, W. Eugene Smith, 1955, Vol. 2, Pg. 50

Fig. 7:6. *Mary Schenely Fountain*, Matthew Conboy, 2008
The third and fourth series of images are of a different nature (see Chapter 2).

The main subject is a statue of Pittsburgh Pirate baseball player and Hall-of-Famer Honus Wagner. The remainder of the images’ foregrounds and backgrounds however, would be unrecognizable now that the statue resides in a completely different area.
When the statue was first erected in 1955, it stood in Schenley Park across the street from Forbes Field in Oakland and less than one block from both the Stephen Foster memorial and the Mary Schenley fountain. From the 1970s through the 1990s, it was positioned outside of Three Rivers Stadium. Today, it still occupies a spot outside of the Pirates' new ballpark on the North Side of Pittsburgh approximately three miles from the original location, and a few hundred meters from its site in front of Three Rivers Stadium. Fifty years ago, though, these last two locations, within a quarter-mile of each other were areas filled with a vibrant main street, warehouses, a market hall, a train station and other elements composing what was a separate city, Allegheny City, prior to its annexation by Pittsburgh in 1907.

Instead of following Smith’s precise footsteps and simply photographing the former site of Wagner’s statue and Forbes Field, I decided to photograph the Wagner statue from its current location, yet maintain the same point of view as Smith. In these cases, I felt that this course of action would accomplish more than either rephotographing strictly in Oakland or on the North Side. Whereas the original backdrop included Forbes Field, the contemporary views contain machinery to dig a tunnel under the Allegheny River (a tunnel that was finally opened in 2010) and I-279. The subject of Forbes Field is also noteworthy because of the efforts that have been made to preserve elements of the ballpark including a portion of the outfield wall and keeping home plate as close to its original position in what is now the University of Pittsburgh’s Posvar Hall business library.
These images raise the question as to what exactly constitutes the subject within a photograph and how that contributes to meaning. A strict reading of rephotography would insist that the author stand in the same geographic location as Smith, yet, at the same time, the rephotograph was created while standing in the same location as Smith with reference to the Wagner statue. On the other hand, while this statue has always resided outside of a baseball park (first at Forbes Field, then at Three Rivers Stadium, and now outside PNC Park) there is a definite loss of continuity that is perceived by viewers as a “cathedral” of baseball’s past gives way to a multiuse facility that in turn makes room for a return to the historical syntax of ballpark architecture.

However, what would be gained through making my rephotographs in Oakland standing across the street from the University of Pittsburgh campus would be minimized by the loss of recognizable landmarks. The next set of images, while similar in some respects, will provide a counterpoint to this argument.

From the surviving evidence, it is almost certain that Smith got more mileage out of his work on Sixth Ave., in the form of a couple walking outside of the First Presbyterian Church, a bricklayer, and the Duquesne Club, and all taken from within a few meters of one another. The next three sets of images originate from within a few feet of one other along 6th Ave. in the downtown area. Smith had an inclination for this type
of shooting in Pittsburgh, and he most likely picked up his preference for multiple points of view (POVs) while shooting stories for *Life*. As these photo essays were self-contained stories told through images, captions, and limited text, the number of scenes was usually small and often in cramped quarters. One instance in particular was the “Country Doctor” essay that appeared in 1948 and told the story of Dr. Ernest Ceriani and his small town practice located in Kremling, Colorado. As Smith was dealing with a country doctor, much of the action took place inside patients’ homes as well as Dr. Ceriani’s own home as opposed to a hospital or clinic. Thus, a majority of the interior shots were taken from a ladder that Smith would set up to insert himself above the action, but also resulted in images created from the pivoting of Smith around the ladder.

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The first set of images depicts a couple walking toward the entrance to the First Presbyterian Church on 6th Ave with their backs toward the camera. A polished brass handrail wrapping around a rusticated stone wall in Smith’s image has been replaced by a simple, straight, undecorated handrail in the contemporary view. The same styles of handrails have also been replaced on each of the doors on the front façade. The only element that remains constant through these two images is the stonework that has remained smoke infused for more than one hundred years.

The next set is an almost 180-degree turn and is taken directly across the street from the Duquesne Club.
Fig. 7:11. A. Duquesne Club, W. Eugene Smith, 1955, Vol. 3, Pg. 152. B. Duquesne Club, Matthew Conboy, 2008

In Smith’s image, four businessmen stand on the steps leading up to the entrance of the club, built in the Richardsonian Romanesque style in 1889. Only two things have changed in the intervening fifty years: The canopy covering the entrance now has a monogrammed D and C on it, and there have been plaques affixed to each of the pillars placed on either side of the stairs. These are to certify the club as a Historic Landmark as defined by the PHLF and to name it within the National Register of Historic Places by the United States Department of the Interior, both of which occurred in 1995. Like a majority of the rephotographs produced here, this scene is repeated daily and offers
evidence that although people and buildings change, their basic social behaviors remain relatively constant.

Fig. 7:12. A. Bricklayer on 6th Ave., W. Eugene Smith, 1955, Vol. 3, Pg. 152. B. 6th Ave., Matthew Conboy, 2008

The final of these three sets also features the Duquesne Club, this time in the background, but the main subject is a bricklayer standing slightly off center by the curb on 6th Ave. The most notable feature of Smith’s image is that it is presented in the same extremely vertical format as the image from Mt. Washington. The major difference between both images is the absence of the pair of trolley tracks running down the center of the road not to mention the lack of bricks on the asphalt covered road. Like many
American cities, Pittsburgh transitioned from a downtown, main street-centered economy to one located within the suburbs and online. Evidence for this transition is the almost 30 percent of the Class B office space (space that is located in buildings older than 10 years and in a desireable location) that is left unoccupied in downtown Pittsburgh.\(^{112}\)

![Google Maps screenshot showing position of Smith for the last three image sets](image)

Fig. 7:13. Google Maps screenshot showing position of Smith for the last three image sets

However, his results on the South Side of Pittsburgh and specifically along Arlington Ave. and atop Mt. Washington are more interesting. After finding my position for a shot of St. Paul’s Monastery, a relatively straightforward image taken from directly

across a small valley, I turned my attention towards a view of another church, St. Michael the Archangel, which has since been turned into a series of loft apartments.

Fig. 7:14. Contact sheet showing St. Paul’s Monestary and St. Michael’s Church. From E4-R99 in Vol. 1, Pg. 207
While it was difficult to determine whether Smith photographed both churches (St. Paul’s Monestary and St. Michael’s Church) from the long and winding Arlington Ave. (as it moves from the South Side Flats and East Carson Street to the top of Mt. Washington and Grandview Ave.), I was also uncertain of his exact location.
While composing the first image, it had never come to mind that Smith would have considered standing in the same position for both of these images, despite prior knowledge of his behavior on Sixth Ave. downtown. Later, after reviewing my images and plotting them on a map, I calculated that Smith had simply turned his camera 33 degrees in order to create two different images one immediately after the other.

My contribution to this performance is through the retracing of his footsteps in as exact a way as is possible. This is actually a two-step process that begins before ever stepping on site. Initial assumptions regarding Smith’s photographic practices are not always exact. Part of this was that I took for granted the actions that took place on Sixth
Ave. or with the two churches on Arlington Ave., and I had come to expect a similar behavior on the part of Smith at other locations. This performance is a consequence of being a trained photographer and attempting to find the best vantage point for acquiring a specific shot, regardless of how this will be viewed in the future. Sometimes this decision occurs in the exact same spot, but it might just as easily happen several feet or meters away from the original location. Once again, this leads to the twin issues of space and place in that the construction of sidewalks and scenic overlooks necessarily leads to new photographic vistas. Once one variable has been changed, it affects every other variable whether they are in close proximity or not. With Smith and his analog 35mm, medium-format, and large-format cameras, if an issue was encountered in the developing or printing of images, he might not have been aware of this for days.

This issue leads directly back to an incident that occurred to Smith shortly after his arrival in Pittsburgh. While much of his equipment and most of his undeveloped film was stored in his car, it was broken into. In a letter to his brother, Smith wrote:

Fate, it not only reigns, it gores. Ah yes, that film that working the nights into long days I did develop, I did complete, and from exhaustion I did collapse. That film (the second half of it, about 500 pictures) all packed and boxed and ready for mailing, was stolen from my car yesterday.113

Even though this case was in the local newspapers for a few days, none of the equipment or film was ever recovered, leading Smith to have to reshoot everything up to that point

in time. With the digital medium, though, one is able to proof the images almost immediately and collect additional images within hours or days, if not while still on site. It is this search for precise locations that appears like a choreographed dance, with the rephotographer moving forwards, backwards, and side to side, constantly taking pictures in the event that one of them might produce the same views as Smith created on his negatives. What had been a deliberate image for Smith is everything and more for the rephotographer once preparation, execution, and presentation are taken into account.

In the sense that “performance” brings to mind the thought of a stage, Smith firmly believed that Pittsburgh would be his main character in the epic photographic essay he planned on publishing. His copious notes indicate that upon identifying a given view, he would create detailed records of the placement of the sun, a compass reading with his direction, and the time of the day. Then, over the course of days, weeks, or month he would revisit these sites until he was presented with the shot that he had created in his mind. At other times, he would rely upon the skills that he learned as a photojournalist working in the field and in the darkroom to create these visions in any way he could. Regardless, his particular movements (at least for me) remained unknown until I set about reconstructing his footsteps through Pittsburgh. Only with copies of his contact sheets in one hand and a map of Pittsburgh in the other did I realize that Smith stood in one spot and turned around 360° while exposing three or four frames of film or at other times moving a few feet in order to compose radically different images.

114 These notes can be found in both loose leaf and bound form in Smith’s archives at the Center for Creative Photography in Tucson, Arizona.
Conclusion

It would be useful to conclude this chapter with the same words that Mark Klett, the pioneer in rephotography, used to reflect on his second rephotographic survey in the late 1990s.

The rephotographs and the questions they raise confirm the simple idea that it is not possible to see any place the same way twice or even three times. The photographs can never be the same, and that is the point. Each time and place is unique, and a new view is a call to face the responsibilities of the moment.¹¹⁵

Besides making the field of rephotography a legitimate concern for photography, he has also contributed immensely to the scholarly study of these same images. The forewords, introductions, and interviews in his books all enhance the reader’s understanding of the rhetoric of rephotography. More importantly, they also document Klett’s own changing attitudes toward the field that he named. Klett’s actions have moved from a strict formalist approach that used historical cameras to one that now includes the use of collage, color photography, digital photography, and multiple photographers’ images pieced together in large-scale compositions. The trajectory of these works would be difficult to trace without the support of Klett’s voice in the text.

But how, where, and what in Pittsburgh has changed over the course of five decades. One can attest that the concept of a single “Pittsburgh” existing outside of the confines of space and time is as fluid as it has ever been. The city that photographed in 2008 is no more of a correct view than the one photographed in 2014 or the one that will

¹¹⁵ Mark Klett, Third Views, 13.
be photographed in 2020. Speaking with Mark Klett reinforced this view that “place” is not an idea that can simply be fixed to the surface of photographic paper.\textsuperscript{116} The evolving concept and nature of “place” is the prompting for a rephotographic survey in the first place. One becomes consciously aware of the changes that have occurred in a relatively short time due to human interactions with the landscape and nature itself. As sure as the trees and foliage grow taller, so too do new buildings appear throughout the city. As documentary photographs, these contemporary images have no more of a claim on reality or veracity than Smith’s. It is only through the passage of time, and their attachment to Smith’s project, that the rephotographic images featured here have acquired meaning, even as they have been rendered into the past tense by the continuous passage of time.

The themes of tourism, palimpsest, and performance are integral to looking beyond the formal properties of photographs and rephotographs. What I discovered after rephotographing Smith’s images is that these three traits that I originally applied to rephotography are just as applicable to Smith’s photographic essay and photography in general. In a broad sense, all photographers operate with some degree of a touristic gaze. They seek a scene, person, or even and then capture that moment to a piece of film or a memory card. So too with the rephotographer—he or she uses the original images as a guidebook to much as a tourist in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century would have consulted a Baedeker guidebook while on their grand tour of Europe. As stated before, the photographic palimpsest can occur during the creation of an original image or with the layering of a rephotograph and its exemplar. There is no need to privilege one of

\textsuperscript{116} Mark Klett, personal interview.
these occurrences more than the other in that they both refer to erasure and recomposition within the cityscape. Finally, performance is a natural yet uncredited aspect of photography. Much as Hans Namuth used film to capture Jackson Pollock’s movements, I am recording and recreating Smith’s footsteps around Pittsburgh with my rephotography. Without my rephotographic survey, though, I would have been blind to the purposeful movements and actions that Smith made in order to create many of his images along downtown’s Sixth Ave. or along Mount Washington on the South Side. Together then, tourism, palimpsest, and performance offer the viewer to critique photography and rephotography from a new perspective without regard to their formalistic or stylistic attributes. They prompt the viewer to look at rephotography with an interdisciplinary lens and in doing so, reframe how we look at photographic images.
Conclusion

Philippe Halsmann: How much did your Pittsburgh opus cost in time?

Smith: It cost the lining of my stomach, and much more beside…

Halsmann: What if nobody sees it? Besides a few friends?

Smith: Answer this and you will see how artists have acted throughout the bloody ages. The goal is the work itself.\footnote{This conversation was transcribed during a meeting of the American Society of Media Photographers in 1956. It was then reprinted by The New York Times Lens blog. “W. Eugene Smith: ‘I Didn’t Write the Rules, Why Should I Follow Them?’” Web blog post. Lens. The New York Times Company, 3 Jan. 2013. Web. 12 Apr. 2013.}

This dissertation set out to create a rephotographic Survey of W. Eugene Smith’s \textit{Pittsburgh Project} (1955-58) as a way to explore changes in the cultural landscape of Pittsburgh and to analyze those rephotographs using the themes of tourism, palimpsest, and performance. When Andrew Carnegie built his first steel works outside of Pittsburgh in 1873, photography was less than forty years old. Smith arrived in Pittsburgh in 1956 just prior to its bicentennial during which time he single handedly created an 18,000-image archive of a city traversing through a time of radical transformation. Fifty years later, Pittsburgh’s growth and decline was captured through rephotography—a relatively new approach to photography that is itself less than forty years old. Rephotography would appear at first to only be valuable in terms of a formalist approach to comparing before and after images. At the same time, rephotography has been used successfully in the earth sciences to explore changes in the geography, topography, and geology of the land. However, as this dissertation has shown, rephotography offers a way to explore the
social, political, economic and creative issues that shape the cultural landscape and create a vehicle for mapping it.

As discussed in Chapter 2, since 2009, six dissertations and theses have used rephotography or repeat photography as their primary subject matter and many more have used it as part of their overall methodology. Originating from departments as diverse as Anthropology and Computer Science to Geography and Visual Studies and from schools in the United States, Canada, and Taiwan, these works are becoming more common with each passing year. Even more pronounced and numerous are the theses originating out of the Fine Arts that use rephotography as their primary subject. The inclusion of a rephotographic survey as an integral part of this dissertation will hopefully lead to future research using this methodology and partnering or even expanding it to include other methods and tools in order to track changes in the urban landscape.

The success of a rephotographic survey is primarily dependent upon the skill of the rephotographer and the choices made by the original photographer. This dissertation focused solely on the work of Smith and particularly his work conducted between 1956-57. In 2000 and 2004, two books (not surprisingly, both were entitled Pittsburgh Then and Now) were published featuring rephotography projects focused on the city of Pittsburgh. To varying degrees, both books borrowed heavily from amateur photographers and included few established photographers for their source images. No images from Smith, Bernice Abbott, Luke Swank, Clyde Hare, or any other photographer of their stature were incorporated. In addition, both books gathered their images from a variety of archives and sources rather than from one visually or aesthetically cohesive
collection. However, the interest aroused with before and after images make rephotography well suited for a crowd-sourced initiative whereby all photographers, amateur and professional alike can contribute to an ever-growing archive of images. This newfound prevalence is most evident when searching for rephotography books online. As of March 2014, the “Then & Now” book series published by Thunder Bay Press numbers close to forty titles and includes cities, both large and small and foreign and domestic, sports teams venues, and national parks.  

As a way to build a theoretical framework for viewing and reading these rephotographs, three themes—tourism, the palimpsest, and performance—were borrowed from the fields of anthropology, art history, and performance studies and then identified as contributing to an understanding of rephotography as a methodological tool. Within the scope of this dissertation, these themes were used not only to explore Smith’s relationship with the city and explain his own methods of photography, but also to investigate the actions of the rephotographer as he or she sets out to reconstruct Smith’s movements. Beginning as three independent themes, tourism, the palimpsest, and performance build upon one another to form a cohesive model for understanding Smith’s process and the rephotographic survey conducted decades later. More importantly, these themes could easily be transferred to other photographic and rephotographic projects whether they involve the transformation of cities, natural landscapes, or the recreation of a journey.

The analysis of Smith’s work began with tourism studies as a way to bring photography (both fine art and documentary) out of the gallery and into the realm of

everyday experience. As a relatively new multi-disciplinary field that integrates
sociology, cultural studies, geography, and anthropology, tourism studies seeks to
challenge established views on the nature of tourism and tourists while providing a
qualitative and theoretical analysis of tourism. The behaviors of photographers, both
professional and amateur can then be analyzed in terms of the “how” and “why” of
imaging making as opposed to relying solely on the physical print. Smith’s first
photographic forays into Pittsburgh were exploratory in nature as he himself took on the
role of a tourist. For this dissertation, tourist studies was used to examine the production
and consumption of images that Smith either rephotographed himself or used to scout
future locations. With the proliferation of digital cameras, particularly on the majority of
cell phones sold today, the precepts laid out in tourism studies are accessible and
understandable to anyone who has juggled a camera and a guidebook in an unfamiliar
city.

The concept of palimpsest was then referred to in order to bring the focus back to
Pittsburgh and look at changes on both a micro- and a macro- scale. Palimpsest literally
means to scrape clean and use again and originated from the study of medieval
manuscripts but then shifting over to architecture and archaeology. As a valuable
commodity, scribes would sometimes write new volumes on top of older works that were
erased. Occasionally, the previous text could still be read and this feature of the text is

_____119_____ Tourist Studies and Annals of Tourism Research are two interdisciplinary journals that
offer a number of distinct perspectives on tourism. In particular, Charlotte Echtner and Tazim
Jamal’s “The Disciplinary Dilema of Tourism Studies” in the Annals of Tourism Research
provided a valuable interdisciplinary perspective on the growth of tourism studies alongside
Sociology, Anthropology, Geography, and Psychology. In addition, Jonas Larsen’s essay, “The
Aspirational Tourist Photographer” expands on previous studies to include the effect of digital
cameras on tourists and the images created.
the palimpsest. Dealing primarily with the architectural connotation and the patchwork layering of buildings and other elements in the urban landscape, the palimpsest traced changes as subtle as the inlaying of street signs into brick exteriors to ones as large as the construction of entirely new office towers and apartments.

Finally, I use the notion of performance to draw together tourist studies with the palimpsest so that Smith’s movements and actions could be read as not merely accidental or chance happenings but highly choreographed activities. Several independent images could be tied together through the recreation of Smith’s choreography and multiple points of view could now be seen as originating from one distinct position. Without actually following in Smith’s or another photographer’s footsteps, it would be almost impossible to examine the types of movements and considerations that went into the shooting of a scene. As a form of mapping, rephotography has proven to be a valuable source of information to trace in the cityscape. Rephotography was instrumental in creating a map of Smith’s day-to-day movements and actions while on scene. In addition to physically walking in Smith’s footsteps, the street view and avatar components of Google Maps were used to digitally walk around the city in order to better pinpoint the scenes that Smith first captured.

The nature of Pittsburgh’s geology and economy encouraged either radical transformation or no change whatsoever when comparing Smith’s scenes to contemporary views. With the presence of almost ninety distinct neighborhoods defined by ethnic makeup, geography, or industry, many areas of Pittsburgh have seen change pass them by decade after decade. Other neighborhoods, as in the case of Irish Town on
the North Side or large swaths of the Hill District have been wiped clean from the map by
the construction of professional sports venues or places like Manchester and
Deutschtown that were divided by massive highway construction projects. Annotated
maps of these locations are included in the Appendix B. The evidence from this survey
suggests that change, when it did occur, happened rapidly and made great changes in the
landscape.

While the changes in the cultural landscape of Pittsburgh between 1956 and 2006
were remarkable, the changes between 2006 (when I began rephotographing Smith’s
*Pittsburgh Project*) and 2014 are sometimes just as stunning. The construction of the
light rail tunnel connecting the Golden Triangle to the North Side was begun and finished
and Three PNC Plaza, the tallest building built in Pittsburgh since 1987 was constructed.
Exploring Pittsburgh with a future rephotography project would be an ideal way to
continue the research here. In the case of Mark Klett, when he began examining the
images of William Henry Jackson, Timothy H. O’Sullivan, and William Bell in 1976, for
the Rephotographic Survey Project, he had little idea that 20 years later, he would begin
anew as he rephotographed his own rephotography. As Klett notes in the Introduction to
his *Third Views* project:

> When two views were available, we decided to target the second view in
each series for rephotography, the view made by the RSP, rather than the
original survey photograph. Our greatest interest was in the time period
since the landscape sites were last photographed […]

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What this shows is that Klett began to consider his own images from 1976 (The Second View Project) to be primary source documents as opposed to merely derivative works. Pittsburgh also drew in many other professional and amateur photographers who captured the social, economic, and industrial upheaval during the second half of the twentieth century. However, for the purpose of this dissertation, it would have been an impossible endeavor to even attempt to document even those scenes that are distinct or unique from the sheer number of images Smith made while in Pittsburgh. Working with the themes that Smith first created for his project, I made an effort to photograph a cross-section of his images that featured street signs, buildings, the skyline, street life, and the economic life of Pittsburgh. Future rephotographic projects could conceivably involve using additional images from Smith or those from photographers Luke Swank, Clyde Hare, Harold Corsini and many others that are housed in the Pittsburgh Photographic Library at the Carnegie Library Main Branch in Pittsburgh.

Historically, rephotography provides the clearest evidence of change or stasis when the subject matter is geologic in nature as in the case of Mark Klett or Mark Balog’s study of the gradual disappearance of glaciers. In Smith’s case, he photographed a number of people in his images which often created a radically different atmosphere than if they had merely been a photograph of the cityscape or buildings. As a result, the brickwork on row houses, the cracks on sidewalks, the disappearance and emergence of buildings, and the growth of trees take on added importance for judging the passage of time.
As a result of changes seen both within and outside the photographic and rephotographic frames, the cultural landscape of Pittsburgh is still within flux and changing on a yearly, monthly, weekly, and even daily basis. Photography, as one of the most democratic art forms insofar as it is easily accessible for both producers and consumers of content, is the tool best equipped for documenting these changes. And rephotography is rapidly being used by amateur and professional photographers alike to investigate and compare these baseline shifts over time. Future studies in rephotography will undoubtedly expand beyond the themes of tourism, the palimpsest, and performance that were identified in this dissertation and explore other unique traits found in rephotography. And future rephotographic surveys of Pittsburgh will be made to continue tracking changes that were first seen at the beginning of this endeavor. As the concept of mapping continues to evolve in the art world and as rephotography becomes more commonplace, there will be more visually novel investigations into the spaces and places we inhabit.
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Appendix A:

**W. Eugene Smith and *Pittsburgh Project* Timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>December 30</td>
<td>Born in Wichita, Kansas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td></td>
<td>First published in the <em>New York Times</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>April 30</td>
<td>His father, William Henry Smith committed suicide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>Leaves Wichita to enroll at University of Notre Dame on a photography scholarship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>February 19</td>
<td>Left Notre Dame after one semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February 22</td>
<td>Left South Bend for New York City to pursue photography as a career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>August 17</td>
<td>Hired by <em>Newsweek</em> as a freelance photographer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fired by <em>Newsweek</em> for using a 2¼” x 2¼” camera against the orders of the Editor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Joined Black Star Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Began freelance work with <em>Life</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td></td>
<td>Joined <em>Life</em> full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td></td>
<td>Resigned from <em>Life</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rejoined <em>Life</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>May 22</td>
<td>Severely injured by shrapnel from a mortar on Okinawa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td></td>
<td>Photographed “The Walk to Paradise Garden”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947-54</td>
<td></td>
<td>Produced more than 50 photo essays for <em>Life</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td></td>
<td>Photographed “Country Doctor”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1950  Spent three months at Bellevue mental hospital and Payne Whitney psychiatric clinic

1951  Photographed “Nurse Midwife”

1954  Resigned from *Life*

1955  February 6  His mother, Nettie Lee Caplinger Smith died

February 21  Lorant wrote to Smith regarding a book celebrating Pittsburgh’s bicentennial

March 10  Lorant and Smith meet in New York City to iron out contract for book

March 18  Joined Magnum photo agency

March  Arrived in Pittsburgh

April 5  Magnum published press release welcoming Smith as their newest member.

April 20  Wrote to Magnum informing them he will be in Pittsburgh for approximately four more weeks.

May 20  His station wagon is broken into with his cameras, lenses, and a box of film being stolen. The cameras and lenses are recovered but the exposed film is never found.

August 5  Finished first stint of photographing Pittsburgh

August 7  Left Pittsburgh for New York City

October 31  Applied for Guggenheim Fellowship

1956  February 19  Submitted 3 volumes of contact sheets with the United States Copyright Office in Washington, DC.

March 12  Three volumes of contact sheets copyrighted

April 12  Awarded a $4,000 grant from the Guggenheim Foundation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 1</td>
<td>Returned to Pittsburgh for a short stay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 12</td>
<td><em>Life</em> gave him a $2500 advance for a layout using his Pittsburgh Project images.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Awarded a second Guggenheim Fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>October 1: Began teaching “Photography Made Difficult at New School for Social Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November 24: Pittsburgh celebrated its bicentennial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November: Referred to his <em>Pittsburgh Project</em> as a “failure” and a “debacle” in a letter to Ansel Adams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Pittsburgh Project</em> photographs included in the <em>Photography Annual 1959</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December 25: Resigned from Magnum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Stefan Lorant’s <em>Pittsburgh: The Story of an American City</em> is published.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>October 15: Died in Tucson, Arizona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>November 3: Dream Street opened at Caregie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B:

Mark Klett Interview

This interview was conducted in-person at the University of Plymouth at the conclusion of the Framing Time & Place conference on April 17th, 2009. This conference was an international gathering of scholars and practitioners to share, debate, and theorize rephotography.

I: I’m wondering how your conception of rephotography has changed since you first began in 1977. Have you redefined what rephotography is to you? And what has shaped it?

P: I hope so. And that’s what I was trying to talk about yesterday because I think initially the idea for me was, you know, this then this and it started with a methodology that was fairly straight-forward—find the exact vantage point and then try to duplicate that plus the lighting so that the actual idea there is to duplicate two of the physical variables that constitute how a picture is made. When dealing with landscapes, I think it is important if you’re going to really sort of scrutinize the change between the images to have a common vantage point. So that’s why we adopted the techniques of the scientists who were interested in measuring physical change. Because I think it was also a sort of trompe l’oeil effect. Paul Berger talks about that in an essay that he wrote for the book—the doubling of this and that and the ability to fool yourself into thinking it was the same place was critical to the concept of it. So most of my work has actually revolved around the idea of a common vantage point. But in later work, that’s been changed somewhat and the thing that began to happen through the Third View project and other projects was
contextualizing the view a little bit so that you could see the picture in relation to the space around it. Even if that was a common vantage point, what wasn’t chosen. So you could see what’s not chosen in the picture as well as what was chosen. We got to the point where we could see multiple images, multiple vantage points from different photographers in different eras, different times that we could try to connect into one view. So we had to consider how to make work that was not common to one vantage point but that was connecting various vantage points. So, this got into multiple points of view and multiple vantage points so this was one change in the techniques and ideas. And beyond that, it’s also the thinking that changed for me was how photographs of a common space can be seen in different eras. So that the question becomes, is the place common or immutable in time change or is it the other way around? So it begins to question the actual changing, the hinge of the change, or whether what stays constant. Or does anything at all stay constant, which is probably closer to the truth. There has been a great deal of variation in the way that I have thought about rephotography. And it hasn’t stayed static at all. And I don’t think it should. I’m not really interested in a practice that codifies everything. It gets kind of boring after a while. I’m looking for ways of mixing it up and thinking about reconsidering it, and bringing in different ideas. And using it as a tool for getting different discoveries out of it.

I: I think that what you brought up with the vantage points. I think that you showed the Charles Weed image yesterday. I just went to the Carleton Watkins exhibition at the Getty Center in LA and they had a series of these rephotographs between Watkins,
Weed, and Muybridge. I think the Bridal Veil Falls, they had five different views. So were you aware of previous acts of rephotography?

P: But they weren’t done as photographers per se, in the sense that they were meant to go together in some way or be contemplated together. Those were sort of competing views.

I: I mean commercial?

P: There’s a little bit of controversy about that because I think that Weston Neff was trying to claim that Muybridge and Watkins weren’t really competitors. That Muybridge was learning from Watkins is not going to fly with a lot of people, that explanation. I think that what happens in those views, they’re really commercial views. And they’re really being used as competing views in some ways. They’re not meant to be contemplated together. That happens after the fact. After historically, we can put them together and contemplate them. So it’s a little bit different. So I’m aware of the fact. I’m certainly aware of it when we did the first project that we have all these views of similar locations because the photographers were really exploring the same territory and they’re trying to define the vantage points because they hadn’t been preestablished. And if you’d gone to the East Coast, they had the Old Man on the Mountain, for example. And if you stood in one spot, you could see the face of the old man. So all the photographer’s job was to just go there and make the pictures. It was already predetermined. But if you go to the West, that hadn’t happened. So they were trying to figure out where to make the pictures from. So there was a questioning about where to stand. So you had these multiple choices, that happened, and in certain cases, there was a
sort of codification of that: it looks better from this angle, and people jump on that. Like the Weed photograph that you were talking about, that’s really on the Mariposa Trail. And it’s on a part of the trail that’s not used anymore. We had to bushwhack through a bunch of brush to get in there, it was pretty rough. At that one time, it was a natural stopping point because it was right on the trail. So you get these natural vantage points that occurred, which were logical places to make pictures and so more than one person would choose that spot. So the actual physicality of the landscape plays a role that is often overlooked. Because the materials, the location, all those things begin to dictate why things are done a certain way and it’s often not thought of very much so you see it happening and there are multiple factors for it.

I: And I guess in my rephotography, I’ve seen a couple of different results come from it. One is the physical object—the image. But then the other is a kind of more performative aspect of it. By repeating their movements, you see their vantage points. And especially in Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh has an inordinate number of scenic vantage points, but you can also find them all over the United States. I think in one of your essays, you wrote about [Timothy] O’Sullivan’s penchant for going right off the trail. You know, always moving a little ways off of the trail.

P: Yes, I think he did for most of them.

I: But how do you feel about the performative aspect of rephotography: following in someone else’s footsteps? Or do you think about it? Do you discover anything about the photographer…these prior photographers?
P: Oh yes, absolutely. Sure, because when you’re there at the site, you realize not only what they chose to photograph, but also what they didn’t. And of course things might have changed physically, but often in the West, they haven’t changed very much. So you see the concentration, and it’s pretty common in the 19th Century to have made things, to have chosen the monuments. There’s an emphasis on the subjects, which appear monumental. As opposed to the more subtle landscapes. But there are differences among photographers that are very evident in their results. [William Henry] Jackson, for example, he was more prone to choosing one place, what we think of as the best general view, and O’Sullivan almost never did that. He always made multiple views. I say very common, I should say more commonly made multiple views and you can see several views maybe circumnavigating a place and looking at it from different angles.

I: And especially with your San Francisco earthquake and fire photographs, how were those images shaped by the Second and Third View projects and books?

Well, with the Third View project, that was a retake on the RSP [Rephotographic Survey Project] and in this case, the real project was the electronic product that was interactive and had multiple things to go with the sites so that you could really see the context for the pictures and their surroundings. Things we couldn’t do with the RSP, we were looking to really flesh out the experience of being there in a different way and the context for the pictures that we made. And because it was the Third View, we were really responding to the Second View in many respects. Not to the original archival photograph anymore, so the Third View was in many ways a response to the Second View. And I think that’s what happens when you develop that, I think one of the presentations here was Ian
Walker talking about Michelangelo Antonioni’s *Blow Up*. So I think that what was happening in San Francisco was that was another project on my chain of projects. First was Third View, then it was Yosemite in Time, and then it was San Francisco and by that time I wasn’t really interested in a sort of straight off one-to-one rephotographs. I did that in this case, but I changed the parameters of it a little bit so that it was the same vantage point but from a wider angle and I swapped the left and right so that there was a different strategy for how you read the pictures. By the time Byron Wolfe and I had gotten to Yosemite, we were really looking to try some new ideas and some different strategies—not to do the same things again. Actually, in Third Views too, every time we did it, every time I’ve been involved in a project, just try to change it a little bit so it’s not the same thing every time. Because something strictly repeated is frankly not very interesting to me. There are times when it is useful, there are times when I think I could easily make a picture like that, and say it is the right thing to do because I want to see it that way, but other than that, the process for me is a process of visualization and I think you have to consider it as a way to visualize images and what you can get from images, what you can interpret from them. And every time it may be that you have to change your approach because of the nature of the images or the concept. So the idea of doing a project is really about devising a structure and that is where methodology comes in. There are methods that create structure and each is appropriate in its own way, but depending upon the concept, the structure may change and that is why the methods may have to change.
I: I think that an example of that would be the portico image where it had actually changed positions. And I faced that with a statue of Honus Wagner in Pittsburgh. It was located in Oakland near Forbes Field and now it is next to PNC Park on the North Shore. In my case, I used the statue itself as the main subject. But what do you see as the subject matter in your rephotographs? Or do it shift between images on a case by case basis?

P: Well, in that case, I think that what was important was to have some continuity between them and that was the whole thing that was happening with that project because what was occurring was there was very little that was the same, almost everything had changed and you were looking for one small thing that was the same. And I think there is an importance in making the kind of rephotographs that I have been making where there is a sense of, and this is not true for everybody perhaps, but with the pictures that I have been making, that you need some continuity that connects images, so you can make a connection between the two. If you can’t make the connection, you’re not at all sure if you’re in the same place or if it’s the same thing or whatever and you might as well just take any old picture and put it together and then conceptualize it. So for me, I found it useful because most of my projects do depend upon the concept of vantage point or some variation of that, that there is some continuity between them. So that one image, the continuity is the portico, from the same relative vantage point, from the same angle, from the same distance, so that you have it at the same scale and everything is relative within the image. It’s also in the same position within the image so it maintains a consistency there that you can then use to contemplate the rest of the picture. The only difference is
the geographic position of the camera in the rephotograph. So that one static thing allows you to anchor your vision and contemplate the rest of it so I have found that very useful.

I: And then my last question, and this kind of goes to the heart of what I’m going to be talking about in my dissertation. Do you see your work as documentary in nature, photography as document, or in another way? How do you view your rephotographs?

P: Well, kind of both. The whole idea of documentary photography is a tricky one because one must question what is a document. I think I’ve questioned that all of my career. I think the concept of what is a document meaning that the document would somehow purport to be real, I’ve questioned that. And I still question that. I think that is something...one of my favorite quotes from the 19th Century is “there is nothing so beautiful as the truth, but one must choose it.” And I think that concept of something documenting anything is something that is always under question and debate. So in that sense, the fact that rephotographs, for example, cause you to pause and to question what you’re seeing is something that interests me because you’re questioning the veracity of everything in some way. On the other hand, there’s no denying the fact that what we’re creating, what I create, are documents, that is, objects or artifacts. Personally, I tend to think of them more as artifacts. What I’m interested in doing is if you have an access point to the image as a viewer, that you can access it, then you can also understand the context for the view, that gives you the tools from which you can then interpret it as a document whether it is true or not or to what degree it purports to have some kind of
truth. That you’re given access to what’s been chosen as the truth, that I think that access as to what’s been chosen as truth is ultimately the most important thing for what constitutes this concept of a document. Rephotography as a strategy provides some access in a way, having some method or some strategy is a structure that allows the viewer to then access the work. That is just one way and there are many different ways. But I think in the end, that is a convoluted question and that is a convoluted answer I just gave you, but I think to me, that is more of the truth, that is more accurate, if it makes sense.

I: It does, and I’m tackling a lot of those issues myself. And that’s the difficulty with it. Especially what I found with Smith is he had his own themes for this Pittsburgh Project: street signs or steel works, or staircases. But then I found my own themes within his work: tourism, authenticity, his own rephotography of previous photographers’ works, and his performativity while taking photographs. So what I was kind of surprised with was that as you were emerging with your Second View project, that’s precisely when postmodernism was beginning to become established. What kind of relationship did you see between rephotography and appropriation art in the 1980’s?

P: Well, we sort of published at the same time, but we did most of the work earlier than that. That’s what I was saying yesterday, we kind of got hit up by a few reviewers because they had theories about what postmodernism was and we didn’t really fit into their worldview. But I think that was because they all had a political agenda to some degree. I think in later times the work has been looked at a little differently so we were
alternately viewed as being ant-postmodern but also being postmodern depending on who wanted to do it and I didn’t really give a damn. Actually, I was just interested in…

I: And that’s partly the definition of postmodernism, that there is very little difference between modernism and postmodernism when you start looking at the issues inherent in both.

P: Well, it was a sort of nonentity for me. It was more of a positioning of where people wanted to position themselves. I never really cared about that.