

# **A HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH TO CREATIVE PERCEPTION AS AN ELEMENT IN PHOTOGRAPHY**

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, whom I miss every day.

Richard John Rowe

1943-2008

Maud Mary Rowe

1945-2003

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## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own independent work and that this dissertation, or parts thereof, has not previously been submitted by myself or anyone else to any other institution in order to obtain a degree.

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Date

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Signature

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to mitigate the restrictions of ocularcentrism by employing an interactive hermeneutical approach to the creation and interpretation of the implied meanings in a photograph. The principles of hermeneutic phenomenology are applied to outline the putative strengths and weaknesses associated with ocularcentrism as applied to photography and to attempt to illustrate how the proposed model of aesthetic participation may overcome these weaknesses. The literature review shows that ocularcentrism is a mode of perception concerned with a one-sided preference to sight over the other senses and may limit photographers and perceivers to create or interpret meaning in a photograph solely on what they see. Concerning ocularcentrism, it is not the art object alone, but the self-centred worldviews of the photographer and perceiver that limit the basis for the development of an interactive aesthetic experience. The photographer who successfully challenges the ocularcentric worldviews of perceivers in the world of the work succeeds in initiating participation between all the coordinates of the proposed interactive hermeneutical model of aesthetic participation. Interactivity between the coordinates *artist*, *perceiver*, *artwork* and *worldviews* is achieved through the application of creative strategies during the creation of photographs. These creative strategies may include facets that contradict consistency building, illusion building, defamiliarization, irony, the deliberate stimulation or frustration of a perceiver's interpretation and the use of a known theme placed within an unknown context with a view on challenging the ocularcentric perceptions of perceivers. The application of any combination of these strategies is the decision of the photographer, who applies them according to the imaginary embodiment of the photographer in the position of the perceiver. The photographs produced by the author for analysis in this study presents three images which elicit allegorical, figurative and esoteric forms of interpretation. Each step of the hermeneutic phenomenological process was carefully documented prior to the analysis and are presented in the hermeneutic phenomenological format in conjunction with the proposed interactive model of aesthetic participation. The main point that emerged from this study is that a hermeneutical approach to creative perception as an element in photography will give rise to interactive participation between all the coordinates of the proposed interactive hermeneutical model of aesthetic participation and thus ocularcentric restrictions may be overcome by photographers and perceivers by employing an interactive hermeneutical approach when creating as well as interpreting the implied meanings in a photograph.

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## Chapter 1

### **Notions with regard to the nobility of sight: The problem of ocularcentrism**

Philosophical arguments pertaining to the “nobility of sight” according to which sight is regarded as the most trustworthy mediator between humankind and the world became prominent in Western epistemology as early as the ancient Greek period (Jay 1986: 176). Similarly in the visual arts and more particularly in photography, which is often regarded as a reliable witness to “seen” reality, this glorification of sight remains, to this day, a dominating factor in views promoting an “objectively accurate” interpretation of the world.

Rationalistic and empirical claims regarding the so-called objectively accurate and measurable interpretation of optical facts historically implied a literal and self-centred way of looking at the world, giving rise to an approach aptly termed ocularcentrism. Ocularcentrism in the broader sense originated from the word ocular, which means *that, that can be seen visually*. Art theorist Martin Jay (1988: 308) used this term to indicate how the sense of sight was historically regarded as a trustworthy sense (Jay 1986: 176) (i.e. to be able to believe what is seen before the eyes). As far as contemporary visual arts are concerned, these claims to objectivity still continue to not only dominate but exclude the crucial role of allegorical, symbolic, figurative and esoteric forms of interpretation. In the visual arts, these one-sided ocularcentric claims to objectivity are also supported by contemporary theories such as *disinterestedness* and *formalism* according to which the visual art object is merely regarded in terms of its own intrinsic values, thereby disregarding any other aspects which might have a bearing on its meaning. These theories as well as a sustained literal and self-centred way of looking at the world fail to appreciate the importance of visual artists and perceivers’ interactive aesthetic relations with the work of visual art. As an alternative to *ocularcentrism*, *disinterestedness* and *formalism*, and in order to establish the importance of visual artists

and perceivers' interactive relation with the work of visual art, this investigation will focus on a hermeneutical approach to creative perception as an element in photography.

The term hermeneutics was first used in the 17th century as a descriptive of principles and methods of biblical interpretation and it ultimately became generalized into a philosophical discipline (Devenish 1992: 14). In a general sense the term hermeneutics is applied to the practice and theory of interpretation (Nemahas 1996: 458). The objects subjected to interpretation in this study are photographs; the aim is an identification of their deeper meanings. As works of art, photographs are subject to different interpretations by different perceivers, based on their own pre-understandings. With regards to perception, in philosophical terms, the term means the sensory acquisition of knowledge (Retake 1984: 575). Within the framework of this study, perception does not only increase insight and comprehension, it can lead to the interpretation of meaning. In photography, perception can for instance be secured with digital manipulation, to produce creative perception, to be interpreted by the perceiver.

The focus on hermeneutics — or more specifically hermeneutic phenomenology which includes not only a descriptive method (phenomenology) but also interpretive analysis (hermeneutics) — in this study is intended to show that when viewing a work of art, there is something more to be interpreted than that which is immediately observed. The work of art, in this case a photograph, becomes a subject of creative discourse between the photographer and the perceiver.

### **1.1 Background to the research problem**

Ocularcentrism refers to an approach to visual imagery which is still current today. An ocularcentric approach, however, has given rise to a problem in the visual arts in that it may limit the formation of a full interactive aesthetic experience. With regard to ocularcentrism, the viewer may remain solely a bystander and not become an involved perceiver during interpretation of the visual image.

The concept of “ocularcentrism” as referred to by Jay (1988: 308) forms the basis of the research problem being investigated, with specific reference to the visual image and in particular photography. Sight has been credited as the “noblest of the senses” and the most trustworthy. Art theorist Hans Jonas (1954: 507) refers to “nobility of sight” as “[t]he unique distinction of sight” which consists of what he calls “image-performance”. Image performance incorporates three characteristics, namely simultaneity, dynamic neutralization and distance. Simultaneity can simply mean selectivity (Jonas 1954: 514) as all elements available visually are available simultaneously and it is important to selectively focus or select visual areas of importance during the act of visual interpretation. Dynamic neutralization is discussed by Jonas (1954: 515) as one of the major accomplishments of what is called the “image-function of sight”. Image function includes the concept of objectivity, where the visual image is handed over to the imagination, and a complete detachment from the actual object may occur. Lastly, distance provides ideas of infinity (Jonas 1954: 519) as sight incorporates at any given moment an “infinite manifold at once” and the visual object is opened up for further evaluation. The smallest of disruptions may affect sight, may it be selectivity or the magnitude of the imagination or even the manner in which distance may affect ideas of infinity.

Ocularcentrism is concerned with a one-sided preference to sight over the other senses. In terms of this mode of perception, perceivers as well as photographers tend to rely solely on what they see before them to interpret or create meaning in a photograph. With regard to the principles of ocularcentrism, it is not the art object alone, but the self-centred worldviews of the photographer as well as the perceiver, that limit the formation of a full aesthetic interactive experience. The self-centredness of photographer and perceiver becomes the problem expounded from ocularcentric views, limiting the basis for the development of an interactive or participatory aesthetic experience. Ocularcentrism can further be linked with empiricism (a theoretical approach asserting that knowledge may only or primarily be acquired through sensory experience) and positivism (a philosophical approach that asserts that sensory experiences and their logical treatment are together the exclusive source of all meaningful information) and in terms of which inquiry is associated with sensory experience rather than imaginative

speculation. Robinson (1996: 180) confirms that the Empiricists regard the senses as the most important guide or source in their quest for explanation and understanding. The view held by the Empiricists that “aesthetic experience is a subjective feeling of pleasure caused by our perception of certain qualities in things” gave rise to the problem of how it is possible to determine an objective standard of taste (Robinson 1996: 180). This problem, however, is also demonstrated by the fact that taste, or the standard of taste, relies on the faculties of own judgement and sensitivity. Therefore, it can be said that the Empiricists are led, as a result of their support of an optical approach to reality, to a subjective experience of taste. This, in turn, can directly be linked to an integral part of the ocularcentric view that focuses on a self-centred worldview as important factor in visual interpretation.

During the pre-modernist era, consciousness consisted of archaic, magical and mystic structures (Palmer 1977: 25) and superstition governed over the perception of reality. In contrast with the superstition of the pre-modernist era, sight gradually became highly credited, above the other senses, for its contribution to knowledge (Jay 1986: 176). Historical analysis of the visual arts provides evidence of this conviction long before the invention of photography. The modernist era highlighted the Renaissance period and the Enlightenment; this is emphasized by Irvins (cited in Palmer 1977: 22) where he stated that perspective in modernity represented the “rationalization of sight” which was the “most important event of the Renaissance.” The use of perspective in art was regarded the very heart of modernity. It created a new sense of human beings in space and resulted in a anthropocentric view of life. Modernism endeavoured to reduce everything to measurable terms and to make everything visualizable, i.e. spatial (Palmer 1977: 21-23). Palmer (1977: 23) further identifies the existence of ego-psychology wherein “modern philosophy from Descartes to Husserl is centred in the observing subject, a model carried over from the standpoint of man in perspectival drawing” and in terms of which humankind is the measure and measurer of all things.

### *The invention of the camera*

The invention of the camera contributed greatly to our ability to document, to study and to understand. Photography developed during the 1800s and photographs have been used to tell the truth about events, document wars and social conditions and provide visual evidence (Howells 2003: 157). A photograph came to be referred to as a “mechanical recording”, and the camera was seen as a device that could only show the truth and reality. As photography moved into the modern era, photographers became known as “constructors” (Perego 1998: 201). Perego (1998: 201, 203) stated that “[t]hanks to photography, the century of the machine cult gave rise to modern poetry of the city: a veritable introductory course in ways of seeing.” The “photographic view” was of importance to produce a “visual thesaurus of anything that might excite human curiosity.” This alignment of photography with formalist modernism, amongst other things, initiated a retreat from modernity (Phillips 1998: 165). Formalism raised a belief that pure forms could transcend differences implicit in content and become as important as subject matter. The content or meaning of the artwork was regarded as less important than the formal elements of the artwork itself.

During the late 1800s, some photographers became conscious of the idea of the camera as being a mere mechanical recording device and wanted to rather express themselves as artists (Langford 1980: 102). Photographers were prompted to disregard ordinary scenes and began to “draw a veil over ‘ugly truth’” by portraying the beauty of their subjects (Langford 1980: 103). Berleant (1991: 12) criticizes the sensory pleasure afforded by beauty in his statement that “a particular sort of attention is necessary to apprehend beauty, one which considers the object for its own sake without regard to further purposes.” This explains the notion of ‘disinterestedness’ based on the philosophies of the German thinker Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). When an object is considered for its own sake without regard to further purposes, a special attitude is required for its proper appreciation and meaning. Both disinterestedness and formalism shared a similar weakness as in both theories the object is merely regarded in terms of its own value, ignoring other factors that could influence its meaning. No transformation of meaning occurs and the spectators are simply swiftly connected to the work (Kupfer 1983: 84). Any and all past experience that the perceiver brings to the work remains unchanged, no

perceptual meanings are shaped; the result is that the perceiver will not go away well-versed by the artwork (Kupfer 1983: 85).

## **1.2 Problem statement**

Ocularcentric claims to objectivity have given rise to a self-centred, optical experience of the world and as photography may be seen as an optical, objective form of documentation, it stands to reason that ocularcentrism has had a major influence on the production and interpretation of photographs. This ocularcentric approach to photography, however, limits photographers and perceivers to solely produce and interpret the literal meanings in a photograph.

## **1.3 Hypothesis**

It is hypothesized that the restrictions of ocularcentrism may be overcome when the creation and interpretation of the implied meanings in a photograph are understood in terms of an interactive hermeneutical approach. An adapted interactive hermeneutical model of aesthetic participation is proposed in support of the hypothesis. In testing the hypothesis, hermeneutic phenomenology is applied in order to outline the putative strengths and weaknesses associated with ocularcentrism as applied to photography and to attempt to illustrate, by means of carefully selected examples, how the model of aesthetic participation based on the principles of hermeneutic phenomenology can overcome these weaknesses.

## **1.4 Significance of the study**

Although hermeneutics and phenomenology have been linked to other visual art disciplines, very little research has been done on the significance of hermeneutics, phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology in the field of photography. Besides important applications in the field of the visual arts, the research project will also have important implications in the field of visual communication. As an academic, the researcher will also be able to use the research results of this project to enhance students'



understanding with regard to the crucial role hermeneutics, phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology can play in the field of photography.

### **1.5 Aim of the study**

The aim of this study is to investigate a hermeneutical approach to creative perception as an element in photography. The following objectives were formulated:

1.5.1 To gather research results in order to investigate how the application of the interactive hermeneutical model of aesthetic participation proposed for this study may overcome the limitations of ocularcentrism in photography. This objective further endeavours —

- ❖ to investigate how photographers and perceivers may connect their own experiences to the work of art by means of an interactive hermeneutical approach, thereby imaginatively revealing the implied meanings in the work of art and ultimately experiencing the interactive process of aesthetic participation;
- ❖ to research the interactive nexus between photographers and perceivers during production and interpretation of photographs to illustrate the interactive role between the photographer, the perceiver, their worldviews and the worldviews implied in the work;
- ❖ to demonstrate techniques and creative strategies a photographer may apply to photographs to challenge the worldviews of perceivers and elicit an interactive engagement from the perceiver; and
- ❖ to discuss the abilities and limitations of the photographer and the perceiver to be perceptually sensitive towards creative works of art and how these abilities and limitations affect the formation of a multitude of renewed meanings.

1.5.2 To demonstrate how creative perception may find application in photography by producing visual material, in this case photographs, that may elicit allegorical, figurative and esoteric forms of interpretation. In testing the hypothesis, hermeneutic phenomenology is applied with a view on outlining the putative strengths and weaknesses

associated with ocularcentrism as applied to photography. This objective further endeavours —

- ❖ to demonstrate how in this study the interactive model of aesthetic participation is used as basis for hermeneutic phenomenological analysis;
- ❖ to undertake an investigation into the feasibility, possibilities and limitations of a hermeneutic phenomenological analysis of photographs as research method;
- ❖ to explain how and why a hermeneutic phenomenological analysis may be hindered by subjectivity;
- ❖ to demonstrate that a subjective hermeneutic phenomenological analysis may be overcome by using research results obtained through the implementation of the interactive model of aesthetic participation;
- ❖ to produce photographs which may elicit allegorical, figurative and esoteric forms of interpretation; and
- ❖ to phenomenologically document the researcher's creative process regarding each photograph, explaining how each step affected the interpretation of the photograph or the eliciting of a multitude of interpretations, showcasing an interactivity between the photographer's and perceivers' interactive engagement with the worldviews implied in the work.

## **1.6 Methodology**

### 1.6.1 Research design

The interactive hermeneutical model of aesthetic participation proposed for this study is derived from Arnold Berleant's (1970) conception of the Aesthetic Field (cf. Figure 1). In his earlier research, Berleant (1970: 7-8) identified four coordinates that he considered necessary for an effective aesthetic theory. These involved "artistic style" (the work of art), "cultural influences" (worldviews), "observers" (perceivers), and "artistic creation" (artist/photographer). In his later research, Berleant (1991: 48-49) refers to these coordinates as a field of interaction which involves perceivers, objects, creative initiation and performance or activation. In both cases Berleant highlights a set of four coordinates which make up his conception of the aesthetic field. The interactive

hermeneutical model of aesthetic participation proposed for this research project similarly makes use of four coordinates which have been adapted from the original concept by Berleant (1970). Berleant (1991: 39) explains the nature of the interactive relations between these coordinates as follows: “aesthetic engagement has joined together the object and the appreciator, the artist and the art object, the creator and the perceiver, and all of these under the active influence of performance”.

The interactive hermeneutical model of aesthetic participation proposed for this research explains the interactive coordinates included in this model as follows:

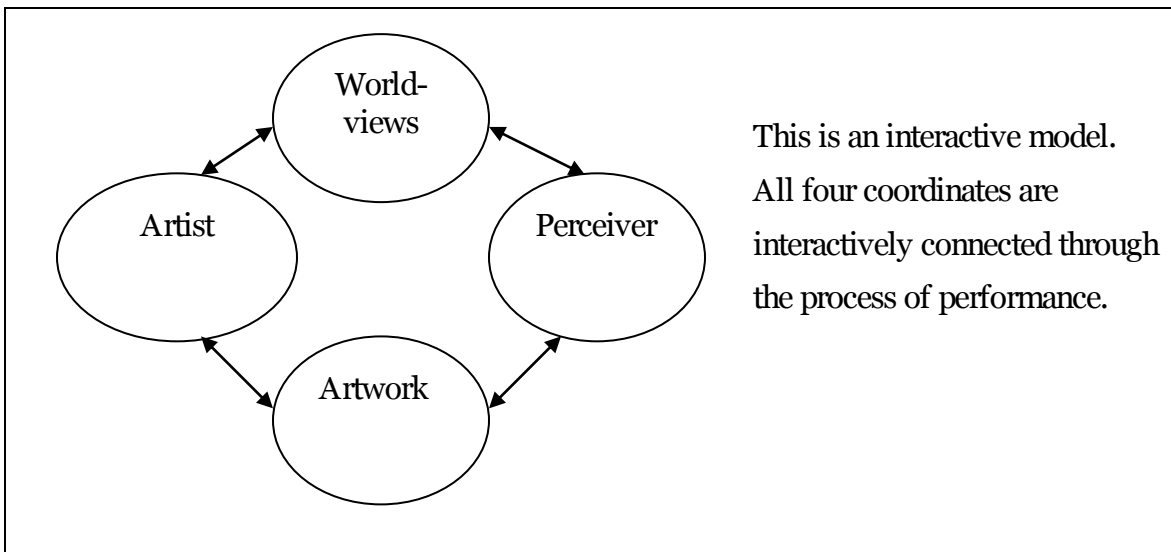


Figure 1 The Interactive Hermeneutical Model of Aesthetic Participation  
Adapted from a concept by Berleant (1970: 49).

In order to characterize the aesthetic experience, Berleant (1970: 94-95) proposes that “we must determine the set of coordinates that commonly appear together and are the basis on which we recognize and distinguish this mode of experience from others [...] we must also determine their relative emphasis and interrelationships”. A study of such a set of coordinates and their interrelationships within an interactive hermeneutical model of aesthetic participation will ensure a full, inclusive account of the aesthetic experience.

In terms of Berleant's explanation, the individuality of each component no longer exists. Therefore an integration of these coordinates is required in order to give a full account of the aesthetic experience. The importance of a theoretical model which involves participation has been emphasized by other authors in the field of aesthetics as well, such as John Dewey (1859-1952), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) and Jacques Derrida (1930-2004).

The research methods used in this research project will be based on historical methods and theories, utilizing relevant literature and visual material. The interactive hermeneutical model of aesthetic participation proposed for this study will be applied in terms of problem statements in the available historical and philosophical literature.

#### 1.6.2 Hermeneutic phenomenology as method of investigation

To limit the problems associated with ocularcentrism, the interactive model proposed for this study is to be applied in a hermeneutical context to indicate how photographers and perceivers creatively interact with the worldviews implied in the artworks. In this study the nature of the interactive relationships between the artist, the perceiver and the worldviews implied in the meaning of the artwork are examined within the framework of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is a general term applied to the theory of interpretation. In the introductory remarks to the book *Hermeneutics & Deconstruction* (1985), Silverman states that “[h]ermeneutics is concerned primarily with *interpretation* and the meaning of what is interpreted” and that “[h]ermeneutics places itself in the relation between the interpreter and the interpreted” (Silverman & Ihde 1985: ix). Davey (1999: 3-4) explains that “[h]ermeneutics insists that in any reflection upon our experience of art, we must focus on the question of meaning” and that “[h]ermeneutic aesthetics emphasizes that art works do not merely re-interpret and re-represent subject-matters but have the capacity to extend and alter their being.” To explain the concept further, Davey (1999: 14) recalls a statement by Gadamer who insisted that “[e]very hermeneutical understanding [...] begins and ends with the thing-in-itself” but more than often the work of art is “an unfinished event” as “there is always something more to be said”. This would ultimately result in a multitude of different and new interpretations. As a result of

different and new interpretations of the artwork, the horizon of the artwork constantly changes as each interpreter understands the work differently (Nehamas 1996: 459). These differences of interpretations may occur as a result of pre-understandings and cultural differences to name but a few, hence the hermeneutical approach applied in this study. Nehamas (1996: 459) characterizes hermeneutics as a theory that is based on the idea that in order to understand an artwork in its entirety, the individual parts should be interpreted in light of the whole work of art of which it is a part. Therefore, to understand each part suggests an understanding of the entire work. With assistance from the imagination, the gaps in the possible meanings of the work are bridged between individual concepts implied in the artwork which in its turn promotes a re-evaluation of the artwork's meaning as a whole. Gaps, as explained by Iser (1989: 9), "are bound to be opened up and offer a free play in the interpretation of the specific ways in which the various views [individual concepts implied in the work] can be connected with one another." This suggests that hermeneutics is an ongoing process, a hermeneutic circle, which can be characterized as a continuous process of discovering meaning. Another major contributor to the field of hermeneutics was German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) who broadened the definition of the term by including the interpretation of all human acts and products. Dilthey's formula for understanding hermeneutics ultimately included three facets: firstly, as starting point and focus, he highlighted *lived experience*; secondly he considered *expression* as the artifact or text as externalization of lived experience, and thirdly he defined *understanding* as the moment when life understands itself, rather than as a cerebral moment (Marshall 2010: 83).

As this study is conducted within the framework of the hermeneutic tradition, the pitfalls of a 'generic' approach towards hermeneutics, which prevailed since the mid-1980s and which continued to the present day, are avoided. Gianni Vattimo (1997: 1-3) concluded that in the current literature the primary philosophical basis of hermeneutics is often reduced to a vague generic philosophy of Western culture. In this regard he rightly criticizes the degeneration of hermeneutics since the mid-1980s into an 'ecumenical' form which deprived 20th century hermeneutics of precise definition. In light of this, the literature pertaining to hermeneutics consulted in this study is predominantly confined to the period preceding 1985.

Hermeneutic phenomenology brings together two forms of inquiry, namely hermeneutics, which deals with the science of interpretation, and phenomenology, a philosophical approach to research attempting to expose underlying structures through the observation of phenomena, describing how things appear and speak for themselves. Hermeneutic phenomenology explains the process — an interpretative process which yields no final result — whereby the object of inquiry undergoes an ever-continuing and infinite state of “becoming” and how this process develops and is interpreted (Marshall 2010: 82, 83).

Visual material will be developed as demonstrative examples. Hermeneutic phenomenological methods will be used to analyze these examples in conjunction with the proposed interactive theoretical model. Hermeneutic phenomenology may thus inter alia be used to document the creative process during the production of photographs that will elicit an interactive engagement. This documentation will include creative decisions and anticipations of how the perceiver might respond and how these decisions and anticipations affect the production of photographs that elicit aesthetic participation by perceivers. The hermeneutic phenomenological methods will further demonstrate how the interactive coordinates are integrated with each other as proposed in the interactive theoretical model. The documented process will illustrate that the creative process is not a self-centred process, but takes into consideration pre-conceived ideas of the perceiver and ultimately challenges the ocularcentric ideals of the perceiver.

### 1.6.3 Methodological assumptions

Within the hermeneutical context of this study, the following are accepted as given:

- ❖ An ocularcentric approach in the creation and interpretation of photographs will not result in a complete aesthetic experience.
- ❖ In line with the argument of Cheetham, Holly and Moxey (1998: 3), the implementation of an interactive model of aesthetic participation is based on the

- assumption that works of art [which is here meant to specifically include photographs] have hidden meanings that are in need of revelation.
- ❖ Many different, renewed interpretations of implied meanings are contemplated as a result of a perceiver's distinct cultural differences and pre-understandings.
  - ❖ As a result of different and new interpretations, the implied meanings in a photograph may change as each interpreter understands its meaning differently.
  - ❖ The boundaries of the work of art or photograph are constantly changing as a result of varying and new interpretations the work is subjected to.
  - ❖ Interpretation of a photograph involves re-experiencing the process undertaken by the photographer who in turn, during the production phase, takes into consideration an interpreter's reconstruction of the implied meanings in the work.
  - ❖ Perceivers must adopt an attitude of aesthetic reflection when interpreting the implied meanings in the work and interact with the work which is conceived as a flow of thought opened up by the work.

### **1.7 Organization of the study**

The presentation of and subsequent analysis of the results yielded by the study *A hermeneutical approach to creative perception as an element in photography* is offered in four chapters.

Chapter 1, "Notions with regard to the nobility of sight: The problem of ocularcentrism", formulates the research problem investigated. In support of the hypothesis that "the restrictions of ocularcentrism may be overcome when the creation and interpretation of the implied meanings in a photograph is understood in terms of an interactive hermeneutical approach", an adapted interactive hermeneutical model of aesthetic participation is proposed.

Chapter 2, "Creative perception as a factor in photography", begins with an exploration of aesthetic participation as an alternative to ocularcentrism and the role of the aesthetic object. The chapter continues with a discussion on the creative sharing of implied meanings between photographers and perceivers through *poiesis*, *aesthesis* and *catharsis*.

To initiate the interactive process between perceiver and the worldviews implied in the meaning of the artwork, the concept of empathy and the use of patterns of identification as creative strategy by photographers are discussed. For the intensifying of interactive experience and the discovery of new or renewed meanings in a photograph, further creative strategies — that include facets that contradict consistency building, illusion building, the deliberate stimulation or frustration of a perceiver’s interpretation and the use of a known theme within a specific period placed within an unknown context — are discussed to challenge the ocularcentric perceptions of perceivers. Lastly, the abilities and limitations of the photographer and perceiver to be perceptually sensitive towards creative works of art are discussed in order to demonstrate how these abilities and limitations affect the formation of aesthetic objects and the formation of a multitude of renewed and new meanings. The findings that emanated from the study of the Interactive Hermeneutical Model (cf. Figure 1) are discussed at the end of individual sub-sections in this chapter in order to identify and reflect on the key aspects which have an impact on aesthetic participation. Chapter 2 deals predominately with the interpretive, i.e. the hermeneutical aspects of the research process applied in this study, thus focusing on hermeneutics, aptly defined by Thurber (cited in Marshall 2010: 83) as the “art and science of interpretation.” This approach, for the moment, thus precludes a more in-depth consideration of phenomenology, a method that is thoroughly considered — as well as its relation to hermeneutics — in Chapter 3. Phenomenology is, nevertheless, not altogether disregarded in Chapter 2, but is and should be seen as an underlying concept to be read into the chapter as hermeneutics also involves an interactive and infinite process of observation, reflection, questioning and so forth for the formation of a multitude of new, renewed and renewable meanings.

Chapter 3, “Hermeneutic phenomenological analysis as a method of investigation”, begins with a discussion on the essential features of and background to phenomenology and investigates the feasibility, possibilities and limitations of a phenomenological analysis as research method. The chapter continues with a discussion concerning the application of hermeneutic phenomenology to photography and concludes with a hermeneutic phenomenological analysis of three photographs, produced by the author, that elicit allegorical, figurative and esoteric forms of interpretation and that showcase an



interactivity between the photographer's and perceivers' interactive engagement with the worldviews implied in the work.

In Chapter 4, final conclusions will be drawn based on the objectives presented in the aim of the study in order to determine whether these objectives were reached, to what extent it can be applied in the photographic medium and the implications thereof. The final conclusions will further identify any possible shortcomings of the study and suggest recommendations regarding further study to be undertaken in related fields of investigation.

## Chapter 2

### **Creative perception as a factor in photography**

The idea of photography and the development of photography resulted from a “desire to create a likeness of someone or something that was deemed worth commemorating” (Hirsch 2000: 3). Photography basically came to the fore as a way of fixing a formed camera image through the action of light upon light sensitive substances accurately (Newhall 1982: 9). Therefore, photography can be said to have been developed as the result of a desire for visual representation, or, as stated by Walton (1996: 174), as “merely mechanical reproductions of reality”, and photography became associated with an optical form of interpretation. As a result of the optical basis that became associated with photography, photography became categorized as an ocularcentric discipline. This notion is made more evident in the following statement by Sontag (1977: 88): “[The camera] recorded a natural image, that is an image which comes into being by the agency of Light alone, without any aid whatever from the artist's pencil.” The photographer thus was thought to be a non-interfering observer only. The image or photograph thus produced, predisposed to earlier ideas on photography, became associated with a copy of reality — an ocularcentric reproduction of reality.

It is the aim of this chapter to investigate the assumption that an ocularcentric approach in the creation and interpretation of photographs will not result in a complete aesthetic experience. This chapter will illustrate the importance of all the coordinates in the aesthetic field (cf. Figure 1) working together, interactively, to result in a complete aesthetic engagement. As indicated by the adapted aesthetic model initially developed by Berleant (1970: 49), each coordinate — i.e. the producer of the artwork, the artwork, the perceiver and the influences of the world represented in the photograph — works in conjunction with each other in terms of interactive creative relationships. The broad focus of this chapter occasions that the art object is opened up to investigation, transforming the initial art object (photograph) imaginatively into a series of aesthetic objects within the formal structure of the aesthetic experience.

## **2.1 Aesthetic experience of the aesthetic object as opposed to cognitive perception: An alternative to ocularcentrism**

As mentioned in Chapter 1, a set of identified coordinates and their interrelationships within the proposed aesthetic model of aesthetic participation will ensure that an inclusive and full account is given of the aesthetic experience. The coordinates investigated incorporate the interrelationships of the photographer and the perceiver with the world represented in the photograph. An alternative to ocularcentrism involves an interactive experience by perceivers to connect their own experiences with the work of art and to imaginatively reveal the implied meanings in the photograph and, by so doing, to ultimately experience the full creative process of aesthetic participation.

### **2.1.1 Artwork**

In order to engage the perceiver's imagination, the work of art has to contain certain qualities to prompt the formation of an aesthetic object. Aesthetic objects can be explained as unreal objects constituted and apprehended by the imagination. According to this view, an aesthetic object has no physical properties, only those properties which are associated with sensory perception. Dufrenne (cited in Robinson 1996: 182) argues that "the aesthetic object is a phenomenal object [...] which nevertheless has 'worlds': A represented world of persons, places and things and an expressed world of qualities that give the work its unified, person-like character". He furthermore argues that "[t]he aesthetic object bears its meaning within itself and is a world unto itself" (Dufrenne 1973: 146).

According to Morris (1943: 73), "[t]he mastery of art reveals not only surface expressiveness but also layers of meaning". Some works of art may contain symbolic representations or represent real-life situations and various other themes which will evoke aesthetic interest. All of these factors affect the formation of the aesthetic object by perceivers. In complex works of art, perceivers may need to analyze the artwork several times to grasp its structure (Rader & Jessup 1976: 20, 92) and these analyses require

active aesthetic participation by perceivers in the formation of many possible aesthetic objects, also testing their presumptions to reveal the implied meanings of the work.

In line with the argument put forward by the Polish phenomenologist Roman Ingarden (1961: 289), the central mistake of views concerning the nature of aesthetic experience is the idea that the object of the experience “is *identical* with an element of the real world and the object of our activities or cognition.” The point that Ingarden makes is that there is a difference between cognitive perception of a real object and the experience of an aesthetic object. If the object or photograph is not perceived as an aesthetic object, it remains purely an object. The result of this view would be merely an ocularcentric interpretation of the photograph.

Ingarden (1961: 302) explains that when perceivers view an artwork, they firstly observe the initial object, referred to as the artwork itself, and start searching for a “new harmony of qualities, as yet only anticipated.” Perceivers improve on the initial object, which contains richer content than had been initially observed in the work of art. This stimulates the perceiver to form an aesthetic object, that is, “if perceived in an aesthetic attitude, it provides a psychic subject with stimuli to form a corresponding aesthetic object” (Ingarden 1961: 301).

### 2.1.2 Worldviews

Berleant (1970: 86) explains that aesthetic experience is not an isolated individual experience, even when the experience occurs in isolation. Perceivers always bring along with them their individualistic cultures as well which play an important role in the formation of alternate aesthetic objects. Berleant (1991: 191) indicates that perceptions which are formed during aesthetic participation include regions of imagination, fantasy and memory. What Berleant is pointing out is the fact that the worldviews of artists as well as perceivers may alter their perceptions of the artwork during the process of interactive participatory aesthetic experience and that this alters the stimulus needed for the formation of the aesthetic object. The formation of the aesthetic object becomes affected by what the experience is, what is meant by this experience and what it entails,

all of which are affected by the way the world is experienced and comprehended. Artists may use this in their works as a means to challenge perceivers' ocularcentric worldviews and to reveal other possible meanings in their work. This elicits an interactive aesthetic participation with a particular work as perceivers are challenged to participate in the completion of the aesthetic object.

### 2.1.3 Perceiver

Jauß (1982: 10) is of the opinion that aesthetic experience takes perceivers as well as artists into other worlds of the imagination and removes the constraints of time. He states that aesthetic experience can anticipate future experience and ultimately produce possible actions and that it furthermore allows recognition and realization of oneself.<sup>1</sup> The aesthetic objects that are formed during the aesthetic participation by the perceiver become affected by anticipation and experience and may become questioned, renewed, or even totally altered as a result of these influences on the interactive participatory experience.

### 2.1.4 Artist

Artists frequently not only create possible worlds beyond the norm which evoke creative aesthetic experience, but may also produce artworks that constitute multiple possible meanings (Jauß 1982: 12). As a creative strategy, artists may imply certain ideologies and moral values in the artwork depicting part of their worlds. Such worlds can be discerned as an extension of the work to its creator, revealing the world of the artist as a portrayal of possible worldviews held by the artist (Dufrenne 1973: 25; 102). However, the worldview depicted in the artwork could have been placed there strategically with the purpose to challenge the ocularcentric worldviews of the perceivers as they become actively involved in the aesthetic experience suggested in the artwork and prompted by the worldview depicted by the artist.

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<sup>1</sup> Ingarden (1961: 290) illustrates this by using the example of a perceiver who is confronted for the first time with a tragic situation. Although this situation has never previously existed for this particular perceiver, he or she can anticipate this situation and still become aesthetically involved in the artwork.

Berleant (1991: 22) considers various trends in art that require an active involvement in visual perception for the artwork to prompt aesthetic objects and evoke meaning. In Dadaism, for example, where the art object appears obscure, its appreciation rests upon meaning associated with the artwork. Krausse (2005: 99) quoted Dadaist Hans Arp in this regard, where Arp stated that “Dadaists wanted to protest against man’s stupidity [...] and force him to think or to rethink.” In photography, photomontages (a juxtaposition of various images in one photograph) are historically connected to Berlin Dadaists. These images evoke aesthetic interest as the juxtapositions move beyond the realism of the photographs (Lenman 2005: 497). Beginning 1918, Cologne Dada activist Max Ernst (1891-1976) experimented with collages<sup>2</sup> in his art and by the early 1920s his artworks expressed the associations of things and events, the freedom of artistic choice and started playing havoc with images and meanings (De la Croix, Tansey & Kirkpatrick 1991: 982).



Plate 2.1 *Oedipus Rex* by Max Ernst  
(Bischoff 2003: 25).

An example of Max Ernst’s work can be seen in Plate 2.1. These collages became perceived both as a product and visualization from snippets of modern life. The artist’s juxtaposition and subsequent merging of divergent ideas, especially ideas which

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<sup>2</sup> Collages contain the joining of fragments of all types of images from books, magazines and prints. The juxtaposition of images uses the same technique applied in photomontages.

contradict the perceiver's mere ocularcentric experience of the artwork, may lead to or prompt aesthetic participation.

A further art trend that Berleant (1991: 23) investigates and which is used by artists is "happenings", where participants reconstruct what they have seen imaginatively. Happenings fall into the category of performance, yet this performance has no audience, only participants, and whereby a composite of what is projected is formed imaginatively by perceivers, shaped by the senses to initiate the formation of imaginary objects.

#### 2.1.5 Deductions drawn from the interactive hermeneutical model

Together with the artist, the perceiver incorporates the combination of the senses, imagination and anticipation of worldviews implied in the possible meanings of the photograph to participate in the completion of the aesthetic object. This illustrates the interrelationship between the coordinates of the aesthetic field as indicated in the interactive model proposed for this study (cf. Figure 1).

Photographs that illicit the formation of corresponding aesthetic objects have to contain the qualities to do so. Photographers therefore need to produce photographs that elicit reflection and constitute multiple possible meanings or layers of meaning. To achieve this, photographers predict how perceivers will interpret a photograph by taking into consideration perceivers' ocularcentric worldviews. To initiate the formation of the aesthetic object, perceivers, during aesthetic participation with the work, form perceptions which draw upon regions of the imagination, fantasy and memory, and this enables perceivers to alter their perceptions of the artwork and the stimulus needed for the formation of aesthetic objects. All aesthetic objects formed during aesthetic participation challenges the perceiver to question, renew or even alter ocularcentric perceptions revealing a multitude of new corresponding aesthetic objects and a multitude of layers of meaning in the photograph.

## **2.2 Creative sharing of implied meanings: The nexus between *poiesis*, *aesthesis* and *catharsis* as an alternative to disinterested contemplation**

In the preceding section it was shown that ocularcentrism gives rise to the artist and perceiver focusing on their self-centred worldviews to interpret a work of art, which relies solely on their sensory perception of reality. To illustrate further theories that do not incorporate all the coordinates of the aesthetic field, theories will be investigated that are in accordance with notions originating from “Art for Art’s Sake” (*l’art pour l’art*) and disinterestedness, which culminated in formalism. In terms of these theories, the worldviews of the artist and perceiver now are altogether excluded as to focus on the qualities of the work of art itself. The autonomy of the worldviews of the artist and perceiver, previously brought about by their ocularcentric (self-centred) worldviews, is now replaced by the autonomy of the work of art itself. In light of this, an alternative to “disinterested contemplation” is of importance to illustrate the full interactivity between all the coordinates of the interactive model as proposed in Figure 1.

### 2.2.1 Artwork

It was during the Renaissance that beauty was regarded most important in an artwork, whereby an ocularcentric view of art was of importance. According to Wittkower (1950: 15), as time passed by, however, the interpreter of final truths emerged: The philosopher retired from formal logic and the artist aimed to produce “Art for Art’s Sake”. In line with this aesthetic theory, art is self-sufficient or self-contained, to be evaluated with regard to intrinsic values. Any moral, political, social or didactic criteria are to be totally disregarded (Bisschoff 1992: 15). This resulted in art that was aesthetic and individualistic (Hirsch 2000: 214). Following the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, artists lived by the principle of “Art for Art’s Sake”. Wittkower (1950: 15) highlighted two aspects that were of importance to “Art for Art’s Sake”: Firstly that it safeguarded the integrity of art and, secondly, that it became the artist’s password, acknowledging the existence of one law and one language which existed for the artist: pure art.

Within the field of aesthetics, the concept of “Art for Art’s Sake” developed into the notion of formalism which focused on the autonomy of the artwork. The formalist theory benefits the design elements in a work of art (Howells 2003: 123). It directs the attention



of the perceiver to the aesthetic features of the art object. The emergence of formalism made the art object independent, and consequently the art object had to be regarded for its aesthetic qualities only. The formalists were inclined to focus entirely on the art object, on the art object's pictorial qualities (Berleant 1970: 41, 37). British art critics Clive Bell (1958) and Roger Fry (1964) both support the concept of autonomous art. The American art critic Suzi Gablik discusses the concept of autonomous art in relation to the changes that occurred from the Renaissance until the modern era. Gilmour (1986: 72) explains that Gablik's thesis about the history of art, in short, reflects the formalist creed, meaning that art is now simply about art and the history of the artist's purpose is changed to the construction of pure form. Gilmour (1986: 73) criticizes the formalistic theory by stating that "formalism exaggerates the degree of autonomy possible within the creative process", duly as a result of the emphasis on "the construction of pure forms." He further states that "the freedom gained through abstraction threatens to undermine meaning by detaching visual forms from the larger context of life." Gilmour (1986: 73) subsequently quotes Maurice Merleau-Ponty in this regard: "It is certainly right to condemn formalism, but it is ordinarily forgotten that its error is not that it esteems form too much, but that it esteems it so little that it detaches it from meaning." Gilmour's final critique is that "purity of form appears to be an untenable idea, since it divorces visual form from its role in the interpretation of reality" (Gilmour 1986: 73). In formalism the art object, rather than the artist, the observer, or their respective worldviews, is the proper focus of our perceptual attention. The formalist theory fails to recognize the interaction between the coordinates in the aesthetic field. An artwork's meaning can never be totally separated from ideologies, morals, ethics and foreknowledge.

Bell and Fry further support the philosophy of G.E. Moore (1873-1958) who claimed that some things are simply "good in themselves" (Burgin 1986: 31). Both Bell and Fry claimed that "significant form" in itself gives rise to aesthetic emotion (Burgin 1986: 31). For Bell it is only "significant form" that is important for what uniquely is artistic in works of art (Crowther 1993: 39). The representative elements in the artwork are of major importance for appreciation of the artwork. "To appreciate a work of art, we need bring with us nothing but a sense of form and colour and a knowledge of three-dimensional space" (Bell 1947: 27). This formalist standpoint is evident in the following

definition of “significant form”: “In each [work of art], lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions. These relations and combinations of lines and colours, these aesthetically moving forms, I call ‘Significant Form’; and ‘Significant Form’ is the one quality common to all works of visual art” (Bell 1947: 8).

Art critic Clement Greenberg (Burgin 1986: 30) proposed some assumptions regarding the autonomy of art; he discussed art as autonomous whereby the artist expresses the “purely visual” through art. The German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) held that the object should be contemplated as it is in itself and apart from all interest — in other words it is now the work itself that is autonomous or independent from the interest (worldviews) of the artist and the perceiver. As a result a more radical type of ocularcentrism was brought to the fore, characterised as follows by Rader and Jessup (1976: 47): “[Disinterestedness] is to have a detached interest in the object as sheer spectacle.” The work of art — degraded to a mere optic spectacle — now implied an even more radical form of ocularcentrism. The implications of “disinterestedness” are furthermore distinguished by Jauß (1982: 30-31) as a self-centred experience where “the self is wholly absorbed in elementary pleasure and this pleasure is sufficient unto itself” as long as it had no connection with anything that was applicable to the rest of humankind’s existence — thus independent or autonomous from the worldviews of the artist and perceiver. As a theory, disinterestedness thus does not incorporate all the coordinates of the interactive hermeneutical model of aesthetic participation adapted for the study and disinterestedness alone will not prompt or lead to a full hermeneutical interaction or participation.

### 2.2.2 Perceiver

The concept of “disinterestedness”, a concrete aspect of “Art for Art’s Sake”, was a central feature of 18th century aesthetics instigated by Kant. In his work entitled *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement* (1790), Kant described the concept of disinterestedness not as a disinterested experience, but as a shift of attention to the art object as a fascinating object to contemplate (Kant 1952: 477). A disinterested approach eliminates personal

perspectives, which in effect does not produce complete aesthetic engagement. The art object becomes regarded in its own value; other factors that could influence its meaning are ignored (Berleant 1991: 12). In disinterestedness, the heightened importance of the art object (the photograph itself) separates the object from the other factors in the aesthetic field resulting in a disabled interaction of the aesthetic components, especially between object and subject.

The American philosopher John Dewey (1859-1952) (cited in Rader & Jessup 1976: 69) maintains that a theory such as “disinterestedness” is an inappropriate aspect of aesthetic experience. Dewey states that only “fullness of participation” will result in a complete aesthetic experience. Theories like disinterestedness accentuate aloofness, while theories such as participation accentuate engagement. Jauß (1982: 30) is of the opinion that the element of pleasure becomes apparent in disinterestedness, the self is absorbed in egocentric pleasure which becomes sufficient with no further reference to life. Another criticism of disinterestedness includes the view of Berleant (1997: 85-86) that disinterestedness can be characterized as a surrogate theory, which he refers to as “substitute concepts and half truths”.

In reaction to the limitations of disinterestedness, Jauß (1982: 32) provides the following explanation of the aesthetic attitude:

[...] the subject always enjoys more than itself. It experiences itself as it appropriates an experience of the meaning of world which both its own productive activity and the reception of the experience of others can disclose, and the assent of third parties can confirm. Aesthetic enjoyment that thus occurs in a state of balance between disinterested contemplation and testing participation is a mode of experiencing oneself in a possible being other which the aesthetic attitude opens up.

The testing of participation illustrated by Jauß is experienced by perceivers as the testing of the imaginary aesthetic objects against oneself, against morals as well as against personal worldviews, and this testing is an ongoing process. Photographers may make use of these factors in the photograph to open up the aesthetic attitude of the perceivers as a means to initiate aesthetic participation on the part of the perceiver.

To ensure that an inclusive and full account is given of the aesthetic experience, aesthetic participation, therefore, is suggested as an alternative to disinterestedness. Within aesthetic experience, this aesthetic participation includes activities such as embodiment. Embodiment is not a concept that can stand on its own in sharing of perceptions; embodiment may enable that total perception can occur. This experience, furthermore, does not need to be a concrete experience, but can simultaneously occur within the imagination of the perceiver in the form of an aesthetic object. The French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty understands embodiment in terms of the idea that the world and the body are made of the same flesh, so that “we can understand the lived body by the flesh of the world” (Merleau-Ponty, cited in Berleant 1997: 102). Jauf (1982: 32) adds that the “subject makes use of the freedom it has to adopt a position vis-à-vis the unreal aesthetic object” and that “aesthetic enjoyment always occurs in the dialectical relationship of self-enjoyment in the enjoyment of *something other*.” For example, within aesthetic experience, the artist and perceiver are not unconnected. During the creation of their works, artists also become perceivers of their own works. Likewise perceivers see themselves in the role of the artist and recognize the acts of the artist in the work (Dufrenne 1973: xlvi).

In order to discover the artist’s possible motifs with an artwork, perceivers embody themselves into the world of the implied artist. In so doing, they become creatively involved in producing implied meanings in the artwork (Dewey 1962: 182). This process consists of “a series of responsive acts” and ultimately objective fulfilment. This is an important task to objective fulfilment, in the absence of which recognition takes place and not perception (Dewey 1962: 184-185). The creative performance of the artist does not remain the same for the perceiver who imagines the creative process. To infiltrate the artist’s depths through the artwork will, undoubtedly, not be the same as being an artist (Dufrenne 1973: xlvi).

Jauß (1982: 34) introduced the three concepts of *poiesis*,<sup>3</sup> *aesthesis*<sup>4</sup> and *catharsis*<sup>5</sup> to be used with regard to the perceiver's attitude during the process of aesthetic enjoyment.

Jauß (1982: 35) summarizes these concepts as follows:

“the attitude of aesthetic enjoyment that frees both *from* and *for* something can occur in three functions: for the producing consciousness, in the production of world as its own work (*poiesis*); for the receiving consciousness, in the seizing of the possibility of renewing one's perception of outer and inner reality (*aesthesis*) and finally [...] in the assent to a judgment demanded by the work (*catharsis*)”.

The concept of embodiment, to embody oneself into the position of another, can result in a nexus between the concepts of *poiesis*, *aesthesis* and *catharsis*. Each of these concepts involves either the embodiment of the artist in the anticipated worldview of the implicit perceiver during the creation of the artwork, or the embodiment of the perceiver in the worldview of the virtual artist as implied in the photograph during interpretation of the said artwork. According to Jauß (1982: 35), the three categories *poiesis*, *aesthesis* and *catharsis* are not conceived as a structure of layers but as simultaneously intertwined and independent functions. When perceivers adopt the position of the virtual or implicit artist to absorb what has been produced, they shift their attitude from *aesthesis* (interpretation) to *poiesis* (production) (Jauß 1982: 35). The shift from *catharsis* to *poiesis* can take place when the perceiver might need to turn back to the producer of the work to unfold the implied meaning of the artwork, transcending from the artist's creation thereof. The perceiver creatively and imaginatively places him or herself into the position of the creator of the work and imaginatively relives the creative process and may finally reach the point of *catharsis* or revelation of the artwork's possible meanings.

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<sup>3</sup> *Poiesis*, in the Aristotelian sense, refers to making something, producing the satisfaction of pleasure in one's work (Jauß 1982: 34). This concept corresponds with Hegel's definition of art where he stated that: “Man does this in order, as a free subject, to strip the external world of its inflexible foreignness and to enjoy in the shape of things only an external realization of himself” (Hegel, cited in Jauß 1982: 303). This means that artists satisfy the need to feel comfortable in the world by producing art, using self-producing methods. Through this process, artists gain a knowledge which differs from the conceptual knowledge of science (Jauß 1982: 34).

<sup>4</sup> *Aesthesis* is the basic meaning of sensory perception and feeling and has been given many definitions. Konrad Fiedler stated that *aesthesis* corresponds to “pure visibility” as a definition of art. Victor Shklovskij comprehends the pleasurable reception of the aesthetic object as an enhanced, deconceptualized seeing. Morris Geiger sees *aesthesis* as a “disinterested contemplation of the object in its plenitude”. J.-P. Sartre regards it as the experience of the “density of being” and Dieter Henrich as “complex, clearly delineated, succinct perception” (Jauß 1982: 34).

<sup>5</sup> *Catharsis* is referred to as the pleasure produced by one's own affects when stimulated by an art form. As part of *catharsis*, norms of action can be justified during the employment of the arts and free perceivers from everyday reality providing aesthetic freedom of judgement (Jauß 1982: 35).

### 2.2.3 Artist

With respect to the embodiment of the artist as perceiver, the following is evident: During the process of creation, the artist simultaneously interprets his or her work. This is an ongoing event until the artwork is complete, perceived and judged. During this process, the artist becomes embodied in the position of an implied perceiver (Dufrenne 1973: 35). Dewey (1962: 182) suggests that the act of producing an artwork is guided by the idea that the said artwork is to be enjoyed when perceived. To enable the artwork to be enjoyed by perceivers, the artist embodies “in himself the attitude of the perceiver while he works” (Dewey 1962: 182). As artists produce a given work, they cannot produce and absorb (that is interpret the implied meaning of the work) at the same time. Therefore, a shift in attitude needs to take place. Artists therefore shift their attitude from *poiesis* (production) to *aesthesis* (interpretation) as they work. During creation, the artist can creatively foresee possible interpretations of implicit perceivers of the work, which in a sense drives the creative process. In turn, the artist continually makes creative decisions based on the possible interpretations of the implicit perceivers.

### 2.2.4 Worldviews

Hirsch (2000: 372) states that photographs are a part of an involved cultural structure of signs imbedded with concealed meanings and, hence, do not exist in isolation. He states further that these meanings are based on experiences of the photographer and the perceiver. In other words, for the meanings of an artwork (photograph) to be evident, no single element has meaning in itself but through a combination of all components the full spectrum of meaning is produced. Instead of disregarding issues like moral, political, social or didactical aspects as part of the aesthetic experience in terms of the tenets of disinterestedness, the photographer, the perceiver, and the photograph itself, therefore interact as a whole. Photographers anticipate the ocularcentric worldviews of perceivers and challenge these worldviews in their photographs as a means to initiate the formation

of aesthetic objects to be questioned and investigated. By challenging the worldviews of perceivers, photographers prompt them to question their ocularcentric experiences of reality. This in turn may prompt perceivers to preview implied meanings of the photograph and possibly reveal new meanings in the photograph. Berleant (1970: 37) underlines that “[t]he art object does not exist in a world by itself; it rather occupies a place in the broad matrix of human experience.”

#### 2.2.5 Deductions drawn from the interactive hermeneutical model

Aesthetic participation is suggested as an alternative to theories that take into account only a character part of the aesthetic experience. Theories such as formalism and disinterestedness, that involve key concepts of autonomy, do not give way to the interactive renewal of meaning. Such theories illustrate the inability to account for the participatory and creative aesthetic interaction of artists and perceivers together with the world portrayed in the work.

It can, however, be concluded that formal elements in a photograph — connected to the theory of formalism, a theory which is an extension of “Art for Art’s sake” — is still of importance. Formal elements in a photograph, such as the harmony between colour, the use of light, line, texture and so forth are utilized by photographers as a technique to place emphasis on particular places of interest. Phenomenologically-speaking, the photographer achieves this by manipulating or disguising elements within the composition, which could affect the meaning of the photograph. Perceivers thus may utilize the formal elements in the photograph in support of the content of the work to assist in revealing the meaning of the work.

The photograph itself can be used to fulfil didactic, moral, political and social functions, but will not be necessarily used to question or challenge ocularcentric worldviews of perceivers. However, on a technical level, by making use of digital manipulation, the questioning and challenging of ocularcentric worldviews can be incorporated in the work. The photographer again takes into consideration how perceivers will react to the manipulations in the photograph and within this environment a nexus develops between

the concepts of *poiesis*, *aesthesis* and *catharsis* and incorporates all components of the interactive model. During perception, perceivers embody themselves into the world of the implied artist and during the creation process, the artist embodies him or herself into the position of the implied perceiver. This entails the initiation of interactive creative engagement and contains further links to the concept of identification within the nexus which develops between *poiesis*, *aesthesis* and *catharsis*.

### **2.3 Moving beyond empathetic identification: The role of contradiction in the discovery of new meanings**

Identification as new component in this sub-section is introduced as a concept within the nexus between *poiesis*, *aesthesis* and *catharsis*. As one is prone to identify with certain people, situations and events, identification can be used as a stepping stone to intensify experience for the discovery of new meanings in works of art. Identification within the nexus between *poiesis*, *aesthesis* and *catharsis* can be explained as follows: During the interpretation of an artwork, the interchange between *aesthesis* (interpretation) and *poiesis* (production) by perceivers is converted into a form of identification as perceivers begin to identify with the world of the artist implied in the photograph. Following this, perceivers embody themselves into the imaginary world implied in the photograph. The artist, too, throughout the creation process, interchanges between *poiesis* (production) and *aesthesis* (interpretation), the photographer anticipates the imaginary world of the perceiver as he or she works, which is a form of identification in its own right. In a sense, solidarity between the human world of the artist and perceiver exists during creation and interpretation of the artwork. Identification thus becomes a tool to initiate a receptive attitude by the perceiver or artist and through further investigation of the work *catharsis* may be experienced. Thus, moving beyond identification, intensifying experience for the discovery of new meanings is opened up. Key factors discussed in this section include different patterns of identification as identified by Jauß (1982: 159), discussing the human inclination or propensity to identify with familiar situations or events which are in agreement with their ocularcentric worldviews.

#### **2.3.1 Artwork**



To merely identify with a particular situation or event suggested in a photograph is closely associated with the limitations of an ocularcentric view of an artwork and most perceivers tend to simply be in agreement with what is portrayed in a photograph and as such their ocularcentric views are not challenged. As stated in the previous section, the concept of identification (more commonly known as empathy) may be used as a tool to initiate an active involvement in the aesthetic experience. Empathy thus becomes an important concept in the study of active performance. Perceivers tend to empathize with implied meanings in an artwork, flowing from what is perceived in the artwork. This initiates an active involvement in the aesthetic experience. The term empathy is equivalent to the German concept of *Einfühlung* (a term specifically developed by the German psychologist Theodor Lipps [1851-1941]) which is the “activity of feeling oneself into the aesthetic object”, a physical movement taking place consciously whereby there is an involvement of the mind, the intellect and the consciousness (Berleant 1991: 16-17). The theory of *Einfühlung*, “begins not with a separate object with which we then have aesthetic enjoyment and not with such pleasure taken in an object, but with both the object and the pleasure drawn together in a single act” (Berleant 1991: 16). With reference to works of art, a perceiver may feel involved in what is observed or contemplated. As perceivers view an artwork, they adopt an attitude of reflection which brings with it a sequence of receptive attitudes. In this context the perceiver is drawn into the artwork, empathizing with a particular situation or event which is expressed in the artwork.<sup>6</sup>

The object or work of art is perceived by means of a cumulative series of interactions (Dewey 1934: 219-220). Iser (1972: 280), referring to a text, states that “[a] literary text [work of art] therefore must be conceived in such a way that it will engage the reader’s [perceiver’s] imagination in the task of working things out for himself”. Iser (1989: 8-9) discusses the “literary object” (work of art) as an object that can never be given a “final definition” as each determinancy (aesthetic object) that is formed imaginatively by the perceiver tends to raise the need for a new one which becomes an ongoing interactive

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<sup>6</sup> Typical situations and events that may well elicit empathy can include the depiction of animal cruelty, and the pain and suffering caused by poverty, famine and drought; each theme evokes empathy, beginning with identification with that which is depicted.

aesthetic participatory process. All of these, referred to by Iser (1989: 9) as “schematized views”, fill in the gaps for the interpretation of the artwork.

### 2.3.2 Perceiver

Through initial identification with a work of art, perceivers empathize with a particular situation or event suggested in that work of art. The result of this may be to create unity, even completeness of the art object, which brings us to the concept of aesthetic distance, an important aspect within a creative interactive nexus of interactive engagement. Rader and Jessup (1976: 54) refer to the use of aesthetic distance as “setting the object apart from real, practical or personal concerns.” This makes possible focusing on qualities of the artwork objectively which would increase perceptive and inventive abilities of the perceiver. Rader and Jessup (1976: 56) mention further that “as long as distance is maintained, the better and more powerful will be the work of art.” However, these authors also maintain that the perceiver will be too “subjective and practical” if “underdistanced” and “too cold and withdrawn” if “overdistanced” (Rader & Jessup 1976: 57), which effectively could compromise the realization of corresponding aesthetic objects. Expanding on this idea, Jauß (1982: 152) states that “[i]dentification in and through the aesthetic attitude is a state of balance where too much or too little distance can turn into uninterested detachment from the portrayed figure [photograph], or lead to an emotional fusion with it.” Fusion entails that the perceptual elements as well as the formal elements of the work become fused with the opinions of the perceiver (Rader & Jessup 1976: 78). The consequence of fusion entails that the perceiver may merely agree with what is portrayed in the artwork and this may limit a complete interactive interpretation. The realization of the aesthetic object occurs in relation to the distanced object (Jauß 1982: 31). Jauß (1982: 153) states that “[t]he spectator [perceiver] or reader may enter into these states but also disengage himself at any moment, take up the attitude of aesthetic reflection, and start in on his own interpretation which presupposes a further, retrospective or prospective, distancing.” Important to note, however, is that aesthetic distance is not the same as, or should not be equated with, disinterestedness. The aesthetic attitude calls for the distanced object not only to be contemplated

disinterestedly, but that the perceiver should participate in the production of it as an imaginary object (Jauß 1982: 31).

### 2.3.3 Worldviews

When perceivers adopt an aesthetic attitude, they reflect on the artwork's possible meanings and begin to identify with the ocularcentric worldviews or situations implied in these artworks. Jauß (1982: 159) identifies associative, admiring, cathartic, ironic and sympathetic identification as five basic active patterns of aesthetic identification. These interactive patterns of identification, which may also be applied in photography, can be summarized as follows:

- Associative identification entails that perceivers bring along with them certain expectations when viewing a work of art and make associations according to these expectations. It allows perceivers to experience themselves by utilizing the assumptions and acknowledgements of others (Jauß 1982: 159, 165). In short, the perceiver associates with the ideas, images, forms, styles and visual culture depicted in the work.

Iser (1972: 289) suggests that comprehension, when referring to a literary text, is inseparable from the reader's expectation and points out that expectation is a potent instrument for writers, as expectation may elicit illusion. The same is evident in the visual arts when perceivers — as they associate with the ocularcentric worldviews implied in the photograph — begin to interact with the work. This interaction is conceived as a flow of thought and is furthermore created by fragments of implied visual meaning which is opened up by the work. Ingarden (1961: 294) states that apparent fragments of implied visual meaning are combined to form new contexts and generate further expectation from perceivers. He explains this by stating that “the so-called ‘aesthetic experience’ is no *single* composite experience but a certain number of experiences connected with one another”. In other words, perceivers need to ‘perceive’ from “different sides, in various perspective abridgements, from a nearer or a further distance” to be able to achieve the full aesthetic experience. In support of this, Iser (1972: 289) states “ [b]y grouping together the written [visual] parts of the text [image],

we enable them to interact, we observe the direction in which they are leading us, and we project onto them the consistency which we [...] require". Together with illusion forming, the unfamiliar world in the work becomes familiar and therefore becomes accessible. This explains the importance between the formation of the aesthetic object and illusion formation, "for it is only the illusion, on its different levels of consistency, that makes the experience 'readable'" (Iser 1972: 290).

Iser (1972: 289) states that illusion "weans us away from realities", thus leading perceivers away from the initial object and assists with the formation of the aesthetic object. The formation of illusions is continually associated with what Iser (1972: 291) designates as "alien associations". During the process of illusion building (formation of the aesthetic object), perceivers incorporate their own imaginative worlds and conflicts with other possibilities of fulfilment may emerge as "alien associations". Through this process the perceiver alternates between illusion and disillusion, obtaining a balance between the two, opening up the familiar as well as the unfamiliar world and without being confined to a single interpretation, it stimulates the aesthetic experience and the formation of the aesthetic object. As the perceivers become part of the continuous process of the formation of illusion (a strategy used to create a sequence of illusions that confirms perceivers' identification with ocularcentric associations) and disillusion (a strategy used to create a sequence of illusions that contradict perceivers' identification with ocularcentric associations), they project, recede, make decisions, accept, reject and question all under the dynamic process of recreation (Iser 1972: 293).

- Admiring identification leads to the idea of faultlessness as the aesthetic object surpasses expectations in the direction of the ideal (Jauß 1982: 168). Photographers may achieve this by revealing an ocularcentric situation that perceivers may identify with, for example the admiration for a heroic, unselfish, decent and noble person, but actually depicting this person in an overly exalted or grand situation. The situation depicted thus defamiliarizes the perfection of the noble, unselfish individual. The hold exerted by admiring identification can be severed through mockery of the assumed or expected perfection which may be linked to a heroic character. The comical-heroic character, so to speak, is not comical in itself, but is transformed into a comical character. The

characteristic common to all methods of comical degradation is that these methods impair the apparent credibility associated with the exalted image of the heroic figure by making plain, exposing and disclosing the fallibility that this figure shares with the world, with mankind. This type of unmasking may be equated with an admonition, a warning, namely that the hero — admired as if almost a god — is ultimately nothing more than human (Jauß 1982: 192). Whenever an ideal heroic figure is portrayed not within an ideal existence, but within disagreeable or uneasy situations or circumstances, then the sorry plight and dilemma of such a figure becomes the object of the distanced perceiver's enjoyment and this comical counter-image severs the hold of the perceiver's initial, superficial admiring identification. As a result of the way in which such a character contradicts the expectations and norms which may be associated with such a heroic character, perceivers distance themselves as they break away from the immediate relations with the artwork. Perceivers subsequently take part in the formation of possible aesthetic objects which may lead to new meanings not perceived in the initial identification with the situation depicted in the photograph. Jauß (1982: 191) subsequently demonstrates that an understanding of the comical-heroic character as a mockery of the supposed perfection agrees with determinations familiar from the tradition of parody, travesty, pastiche, or even satire.

- Cathartic identification is the aesthetic attitude “that frees the spectator from the real interests and affective entanglements of his world” (Jauß 1982: 177). Within cathartic identification, perceivers place themselves in the position of the troubled or suffering situation. Perceivers find release through comic relief or tragic emotion. The extent of tragic emotion and comic relief is based on the strategy that spectators can be detached from the immediate identification through reflection of what is represented (Jauß 1982: 159, 177-178).

- Ironic identification refines perception and involves critical reflection (Jauß 1982: 159). Ironic identification first appeared during the Middle Ages in the novel in the form of satire, where the main character or hero is placed within a contradictory situation, for instance contradicting ideal norms (Jauß 1982: 182). The main purpose of ironic

identification is “to pull the recipient out of his unreflected advertence to the aesthetic object and thus prompt his aesthetic and moral reflection” (Jauß 1982: 182).

▪ Sympathetic identification elicits compassion when perceivers project themselves into an unfamiliar self (Jauß 1982: 159, 172). This type of identification inspires feelings which lead to agreement with the adversity of the situation. The perceiver is thus firstly prompted to identify with the situation, to sympathize and to enter into a form of agreement with what seems to be the explicit meaning of the work. In order to broaden the horizon of interpretation, the photographer may disavow the initial identification in order to prompt perceivers to distance themselves from superficial identification with ocularcentric interpretations of the work. In doing so, perceivers may for instance be confronted with a moral dilemma implied in the meaning of the work. The initial sympathetic identification, with a situation which merely conformed to their ocularcentric perceptions, may for example turn out to challenge their moral convictions.

Photographers initially rely on the fact that perceivers will search for consistency in their interpretation and ocularcentric experience of reality. In his discussion of consistency building, Iser (1978: 36-37) opposes literary critic Wayne Booth's (1929-2005) claims of a complete agreement between author and reader.<sup>7</sup> Such a complete agreement between reader and author would not result in a proper aesthetic experience as the role of the text would not, aesthetically speaking, function properly if it is totally and unreservedly accepted. Although authors may deliberately introduce concepts in their works that are consistent with the ocularcentric worldviews of their readers, they use the process of consistency building to elicit perceivers' empathic identification. Consistency building as strategy is a step-by-step process used to position a series of consistencies in the photograph that for example bring about or cause solidarity with perceivers' ocularcentric perceptions of reality. As a creative strategy, photographers undermine this consistency

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<sup>7</sup> Booth (cited in Iser 1978: 36-37) formulates his claims with regard to a complete agreement between author and reader as follows:

It is only as I read that I become the self whose belief must coincide with the author's. Regardless of my real beliefs and practices, I must subordinate my mind and heart to the book if I am to enjoy it to the full. The author creates, in short, an image of himself and another image of the reader; he makes his reader, as he makes his second self, and the most successful reading is one in which the created selves, author and reader, can find complete agreement.

by again adding elements that contradict the ocularcentric interpretation of the photograph.

In addition to utilizing the process of consistency building, the photographer may manipulate and reorient the imagination of the perceiver by the subtle addition of implied meanings that are inconsistent with the meaning of the work as a whole. Through exploitation of implied meanings that are inconsistent with the meanings of the photograph as a whole, the photographer prompts perceivers to distance themselves from the initial identification of the work as well as everyday realities and to participate in the discovery of implied meanings strategically suggested in the work.

#### 2.3.4 Artist

Patterns of identification's full potential may be exploited when the photographer combines the different patterns of identification in a single photograph and play them against each other. By adding a combination of the other patterns of identification, the photographer alludes to the idea that the initial identification had been trivial and had been based, for example, on a short-sighted ideology or ocularcentric worldview of the perceiver. During creation as well as the perceiving of an artwork, photographers as well as perceivers adopt an attitude of reflection which brings with it a sequence of receptive attitudes. Using this combination of the various patterns of identification as strategies, the photographer prompts perceivers to question or even change their own ideologies and expectations, by contradicting, frustrating and undermining predictable ocularcentric responses to the work.

#### 2.3.5 Deductions from the interactive hermeneutical model

Photographers' ability to stimulate a perceiver's interpretations is most markedly displayed in their use of creative strategies to encourage perceivers to become actively involved in an aesthetic experience when viewing an artwork. Creative strategies that can be utilized by photographers to evoke the formation of the aesthetic object may include techniques or strategies used to set the unfamiliar against familiar reality or vice

versa. Photographers intentionally undermine the perceiver's ocularcentric views of reality, prompting the process of aesthetic distance. Illusion is altered to disillusion and new illusions are formed which are tested, accepted or rejected and this becomes an ongoing process to interpret the meaning of the photograph. It is therefore concluded that the work of art or photograph will need to engage the perceiver's and artist's imagination, so that the work of art can never be given a final definition. Imaginatively formed aesthetic objects will raise the need for new ones, which becomes an ongoing interactive process of discovering meaning in the photograph.

As perceivers adopt an aesthetic attitude as they reflect on a photograph, they have the inclination to identify with the situation implied by the photographer in the photograph. In this section patterns of identification thus emerged as a key factor in the analysis of the interactive theoretical model as far as the creative sharing of implied meanings is concerned.

## **2.4 Thematization: The creative transformation of ocularcentric perceptions**

From the previous section it became evident that photographers and perceivers tend to bring along with them a variety of self-centred reservations and ocularcentric worldviews in the creation and interpretation of an artwork. Personalized reservations have a great impact on the patterns of identification used by photographers as a basis for an initiation of a reflective attitude by the perceiver, also imbedding in the artwork some of his or her self-centred reservations. In this section thematization is discussed, including the manner in which style, intention and manipulation of particular themes may transform the ocularcentric perceptions of perceivers.

### 2.4.1 Worldviews

Style defines the creative activity of the artist and opens up the work of art to evaluation. Dufrenne (1973: 109) argues that the main causes for the constant changes in style throughout history can be attributed to cultural influences and the psychology of artistic creation. Style expresses a certain vision of the world, and in most cases style in an



artwork reveals personalized reservations. In a sense style includes craft as well, because to attain style is to achieve mastery (Dufrenne 1973: 103). Aspects which can be regarded as the mastering of craft may include the poet's play with words, the painter's brushstroke, the sculptor's blow (Dufrenne 1973: 103) or the photographer's distinctive manipulations. The photographer's distinctive manipulations provide an influence on general perceptions of oneself as well as the world. Through digital manipulation, photographers can create certain perceptions, situations or events (a certain worldview) by utilizing patterns of identification, or by creating staged events. These representations of the different types of identification could initiate, question, and even change their own ideologies and expectations and lead to the generation of a multitude of possible meanings as the work is interpreted.

In his analysis of the elaborate photograph entitled *The Two Ways of Life* (Plate 2.2) by Swedish photographer Oscar Gustav Rejlander (1813-1875), Lenman (2005: 538, 596) demonstrates how manipulation allowed photographers to alter the truth by creating fictional scenes or staged events. Perceivers are confronted with a remarkable piece of work, a technically challenging photograph of an event that never took place, a combination print of no less than thirty negatives.



Plate 2.2 *The Two Ways of Life* by Oscar Gustav Rejlander  
(Lenman 2005: 537).

*The Two Ways of Life* depicts two opposing worldviews and is the result of an attempt to use photography during a time when painters dominated the art world, raising the standard of photography to a fine art. The photograph captures the moral dilemma between good and evil and although the central figure, the father guiding two men to manhood, is turned towards good, he is portrayed as a symbol of regret.

Gilmour (1986: 90) shows the importance of the interactive relation between artists and perceivers and how this impacts on their transformation of established ideas or worldviews. This, he states, is the reason why structures of intentionality governing the creative process exist between the artist and other people and reflect their mutual involvement with the visible world and related cultural forms. As the artist creates, he or she takes into consideration the interpretative process of perceivers as well as the transformation of established ideas or worldviews which occurs when perceivers move beyond the ocularcentric view of reality and begin to question and re-evaluate their initial worldviews and subsequently continue to interpret the multiple meanings in the work of art.

#### 2.4.2 Perceiver

Returning to *The Two Ways of Life* by Rejlander, applying a hermeneutic phenomenology approach [see Chapter 3], perceivers are firstly confronted with a scene which is in contradiction to their own ocularcentric views as the scene portrayed cannot be interpreted literally since it never existed. Secondly, the perceiver may identify with the central character in the photograph, the father, and subsequently question their own personal ocularcentric perceptions and, with further investigation of the work, be confronted with situations that may undermine their ocularcentric perceptions revealing further meaning in the work. Perceivers may be further confronted with situations that they are not accustomed to, for example inappropriateness, which could challenge their ocularcentric perceptions. Therefore, a photographer can also through the adaptation of an established or historical meaning of a certain theme, question or compromise perceivers' established perceptions of the world.

### 2.4.3 Artist

The transformation of established ideas or cultural forms discussed by Gilmour can be coupled to what Wollheim (1987: 20) terms thematization. Thematization deals with the manner in which one intention of the artist gives rise to another intention during the creative making process of the artwork. Thus it deals with the process of selecting particular themes which develops from choices the artist makes during the creation of a work of art in progress. Wollheim (1987: 19) argues that each activity of the creative process, though unintentional, gives rise to the next and exerts an influence on how the artwork develops in terms of the artist's desires, thoughts, experiences and emotions as he or she works. This results in a situation where the artist's intentions are continually changing and re-evaluated, and can be linked to the arguments of Summers pertaining to *intentio*. According to Summers (1986: 310), the Latin term *intentio* means an extension, a stretching or increase. *Intentio* could mean mental effort or exertion, and implied directness, hence also attention, application or care. The modern "attention" is thus closer to *intentio* than modern "intention", and it might be that an "intention" came to be what one "had in mind" when engaged in concentrated behaviour. This specific character of attention, and series of attentive acts, owes not only to individual character but also to circumstances. This, according to Summers, shows that intention is thus also radically contextual.

Wollheim (1987: 23) characterizes the artist's review and changing of intentions during the making process (which intentions may change as a result of the implied meaning not being strong enough and as a result the artist considers altering the image for the implied meaning to be more clearer) as "deletion". Deletion becomes a method to ensure meaningfulness; it gets rid of what once was, but no longer has meaning (Wollheim 1987: 23). Through the creation of a situation by means of digital manipulations, deletion also implies that an established meaning of a theme can be changed. A nativity theme, the birth of Christ for example, depicted within a normal context as the initial theme, may be placed within a contradictory context of an initiation scene and the initial nativity theme is portrayed outside its normal context which may contribute to a renewed

perception of the artwork. Therefore, methods such as thematization and deletion can influence, recreate and transform meaning throughout the creation and interpretation of the artwork.

Wollheim's (1987: 23) explanations on deletion are related to the ideas of Gilmour (1986: 83) on the artwork's meaning. Gilmour (1986) is of the opinion that the "inherited standards of meaning relativize own experience and thought." He remarks further as follows on the artist's transformation of established visual meanings:

[...] we must give up the idea that the creative act is the work of the single individual, and move toward the idea that the artist's creative activity is the transformation of established visual meanings. We view modern art, therefore, as a concerted effort to question past visual culture and to initiate new interpretive possibilities (Gilmour 1986: 83).

Summers (1986: 313) argues that intention applied (by the artist) to an artwork assists in the following of a theme of a particular artwork, portrayed in a particular medium, during a specific historical period and under particular circumstances. To elaborate further: If intention is contextual (as stated by Summers [1986: 310]), this would assist perceivers in making appropriate interpretations of the possible meanings of the artwork and would also probably give them some indication of the artist's worldviews or ideologies. However, for Summers, intention — i.e. what an artist (during creation) or perceiver (during interpretation) "had in mind" as the result of concentrated behaviour when aesthetically engaged — is shaped not only by the individual character of the intention, but also by particular circumstances. Thus Summers rightfully claims that circumstances influence intention, therefore intention is contextual. This is because perceivers realize that when an artwork depicts ocularcentric scenes or situations within an unfamiliar context, the artist would have done this not by chance, but intentionally, and has also taken into consideration the individual character of the implied perceivers.

Recoverable intentions may be characterized as conventions (Summers 1986: 313). Such conventions conform to the ocularcentric perceptions of the perceiver. Within a work of art, conventions, implied by the artist, are in fact aspects perceivers can emphatically identify with because these aspects are familiar to them. For example, when perceivers (or photographers placing themselves into the position of the perceiver) firstly are in agreement with the existing theme, a new or adjusted theme taken out of its normal,

ocularcentric context may become evident. As the changed theme becomes evident, perception can be renewed and something new or original can become discernable in the work. The artist may combine these themes of a specific historical period and circumstances creatively in an unfamiliar context in order to question perceivers' superficial emphatic identification with historical models or examples to unlock concealed meanings within the work. Berleant (1970: 66) argues that "[n]ot only will each art probably reveal its own characteristic version of the aesthetic field, but variations of the field will undoubtedly appear as we examine different artistic styles, historical periods, and movements."

#### 2.4.4 Artwork

Within the context of this study, the autonomy of the creator or of the artwork creates an imbalance in the aesthetic field. Summers (1986: 308) asserts that if the work of art is totally removed from the artist's intention, the artwork would then become autonomous. Summers (1986: 308) states that one should expand upon the fundamental attention to the work of art and inquire into ways in which the intentionality of works of art may be defined as a consequence of the seriativity of their elements. Summers (1986: 312) characterizes this seriativity as the reconstruction of recurring themes and the adjustments of these themes executed in a specific medium as being historically specific. This is intimately linked to certain characteristics of the image and to the context and use of the image, for example recoverable intentions or conventions creatively and strategically placed within an unknown context in the work. Certain themes that can be categorized here are themes that are significant and can be replicated and manipulated, resulting in contrast between the familiar and the unfamiliar. A particular theme that is continuous throughout history and which contains convincing characteristics in a certain context, which is familiar to the perceiver initially, will increase the impact of the artwork. The familiar can be aligned with the ocularcentric perception of reality of the perceiver and if this familiarity is placed against the backdrop of an unpredictable or unfamiliar context, the contrast between the familiar and the unfamiliar visible in the work is increased and the implied meaning in the work is open to interpretation.

Although Summers (1986: 311-312) regards format, technique and iconographic motif as potential intentions, he emphasizes that such intentions are only recoverable in general. In this respect they are only recoverable insofar as they are representative of a meaningful act in the context of the artwork's making and when its meaningfulness can be verified by the seriativity of its various elements. The best way to recover these intentions is to allocate them to a particular space and time they belong to, to recognize the recoverable intentions as conventions. This playing with themes can be applied in photographs as a particular style as well as a motive. The tracing of these recurring themes and contradictions of the themes can add to the creative interpretation of the photograph's possible meanings and prompt perceivers to delve deeper into the work to reveal a multitude of new meanings in the photograph.

#### 2.4.5 Deductions from the interactive hermeneutical model

In this section, the following deductions emanated from the study of the interactive model. Firstly, that perceivers' creative transformation of the photograph's meaning is initiated by the artist/photographer through the placement of underlying themes within an artwork. Secondly, as stated previously, perceivers are inclined to initially identify with familiar themes, styles, circumstances or historical periods depicted within the photograph and then move through a step-by-step, consecutively applied process of consistency building (cf. Chapter 2.3). During this step-by-step process, initiated by the photographer in the work, the perceiver begins to agree with that which is shown in the photograph and which is consistent with the worldviews of the perceiver. Thirdly, placed intentionally by the photographer in the form of underlying motives, perceivers may subsequently determine discrepancies within the implied meaning(s) of the work. Thus the perceiver continues to reflect on the work which leads to the revelation of inconsistencies in the work and ultimately new or renewed meanings.

It is, however, important to constantly keep in mind that appropriate responses to these creative strategies require a sensitive and cultivated interpretation from perceivers. Without this perceivers will not be able to interpret all or even most of the possible

meanings encapsulated in the work of art which begins with a cultivated awareness of the photographers' creative motives which lure the perceivers to reflect on the photograph.

## **2.5 Cultivated perceptual sensitivity: The effect of creative visual clues**

To understand the dynamic workings of the world, perceivers need to be responsive to the world's dynamic workings and this is where cultivated perceptual sensitivity finds its richest domain. As we are all part of the human environment, it is vital to understand this environment and to become conscious of and more receptive to the zestful workings of the world. This can be no better expressed than through the arts — because it is precisely the place where perceptual experience dominates — and where an expression of qualitative perceptions flourishes for those who have developed a discerning appreciation for the arts (Berleant 1991: 96). Perceivers who have developed perceptual sensitivity as a consequence or outcome of their personalized worldviews — and as a result of a cultivated discerning appreciation for the arts — may undergo an aesthetic memorable experience when perceiving photographs which motivate or generate the aesthetic experience. Key factors discussed in this section include conjectures, possibilizing and visual clues. These concepts are analyzed below to identify whether perceivers are aware of these concepts and how they respond to them.

### 2.5.1 Perceiver

Iser (1984: 389) states that for each instance of interpretation of an artwork, an informed guess is required, a guess which is guided by the perceiver's pre-knowledge and ideologies. He believes that the interpretive act can be bridged by means of such informed guessing, kindled within a guided framework, guiding imagination as well as intuition within the interpretive act. Iser states further, however, that that which evades the cognitive act is signified by indeterminacies. In this respect the elimination of indeterminacies would result in the interpretation prompting creative interaction and engagement. Iser (1984: 389) declares that “[i]n this respect interpretation is always on the verge of becoming creative, yet the creation brought about is not *ex nihilo* but conditioned by *cognitio*”. Iser's argument can be related to the idea of empathetic identification used as one of the creative strategies by photographers to unlock creative

interaction between the perceiver and the work, to ultimately unlock and reveal implied interpretations of the work. As creative interaction between the perceiver and the work is unlocked, perceivers discern indeterminacies (unfamiliarities) in the work which result in multi-faceted implied interpretations of the work.

When perceptually cultivated perceivers (perceivers who are sensitive to the implied meanings suggested in the photograph) view a photograph, conjectures are produced. By making conjectures about the implied meanings of the photograph, perceivers are able to discover and reveal its hidden meanings and in doing so, they move away from the limits of the real object. Interpretation of an aesthetic object requires conjectures. Perceivers attempt an interpretation which may imply or reveal something else. They strive to “solve a riddle, to infer from something imprecise, because incomplete, something else that is suggested, evoked, revealed [...]” (Eco 1990: 9), i.e. the perceivers may be prompted to transform their ocularcentric perceptions of the work. Eco (1990: 148) explains the term conjecture in terms of the interpretation of texts. He maintains that it is the initiative of the reader to make a conjecture about the text, to try infinite conjectures. The perceiver investigates each conjecture against the text as a whole, and the conjecture is either accepted or rejected if challenged by other components in the text (Eco 1990: 148-149). Eco (1990: 58) states that the reader makes conjectures about the text’s intention. He explains that “it is possible to speak of text intention only as the result of a *conjecture* on the part of the reader.”

### 2.5.2 Worldviews

By deliberately combining and portraying the familiar in an unfamiliar context, the photographer challenges perceivers to make informed guesses about a certain theme and which can lead to alternate perceptions and a shift in attitude. This portrayal leads to the questioning and formation of new ideas and meanings. If perceivers are not culturally or ideologically sensitive to implied meanings of a photograph which are inconsistent with the meaning of the photograph as a whole, they will be unable to shift their attitude or question their own worldviews and pre-knowledge. This ultimately would lead to an



incomplete aesthetic experience on the part of the perceiver. Such a perceiver would not be able to move beyond the limitations of ocularcentrism.

### 2.5.3 Artwork

Perceptions of the artwork are a product of constant augmentation by the perceiver, which are essentially a series of guesses guided by expectation (Winner 1982: 90). Nicholson (1985: 34) refers to this augmentation as the making of projections. The initial perception becomes a composition of a series of “visual fragments” which result in the production of the aesthetic object which is shaped by anticipation of what possible meanings are portrayed in the artwork. Conjectures or projections are used by artists and perceivers “to figure out a Law that can explain a Result” (Eco 1990: 59). To enable a cultivated perceptual sensitivity for both artists and perceivers, artworks need to generate possibilities for this to occur, i.e. generate the possibility for the formation of multiple implied aesthetic objects for a multitude of interpretations.

Casey (1976: 205) examines the concept of possibilizing as bringing the function of imagination within reach. Possibilizing is a type of conjecture which finds reference within a work of art which stems from visual clues in an artwork. Visual clues “suggest the need for perceptual intelligence” (Gregory 1990: 317). Clues are accepted as visual data to interpret the world and are placed strategically in the photograph by the photographer. These clues can be in the form of visual ambiguities, distortions, paradoxes and effects of context to stimulate perceivers to challenge their own ocularcentric perceptions. Visual clues generate new or even a multitude of possibilities for the generation of new, possible meanings implied in the photograph. Possibilizing thus comprises the purely possible and pertains to ideas of determinancy and indeterminancy tied to perceptual sensitivity of the perceiver. Rader and Jessup (1976: 93) conclude that when a difficult (to employ a term used by Rader and Jessup) or challenging work of art is worthy of appreciation, the perceiver will undergo a richer source of aesthetic satisfaction when he or she is capable of cultivated perceptual interpretation of the aesthetic object.

### 2.5.4 Artist

Gilmour (1986: 91) states that “expressive power is the consequence of a cultivated response to the things of the world” and this is true for photographers as well. There exists a mutual involvement between the physical world and what is depicted in photographs and photographers need to be at once receptive and active. Intense involvement with the visible world assists the photographer to discover subtle nuances of meaning to be skilfully interpreted by the perceiver. Photographers need, however, to be aware of the fact that the reflections by perceivers are influenced by their own individual personal worldviews, ethics and morals. Therefore, a perceptually sensitive attitude on the part of the photographer becomes more contemplative than manipulative, reflecting on each alteration made during the process of creation. By using a combination of visual clues, photographers lure perceivers to reflect on the possible meanings implied in the photograph. Iser (1984: 389) states that an informed guess is not generated by the selective framework, but pre-structured by it. This means that during the interpretation process, perceivers bring with them a prepared mind when uncovering meaning in an artwork. Artists also predict the perceiver’s worldviews. This enables artists, when creating their artworks, to anticipate the response of perceivers. Inasmuch as artists can anticipate the response of perceivers, the perceivers may also be able to trace down the worldviews as implied in the meanings of the artworks.

#### 2.5.5 Deductions from the interactive hermeneutical model

Creative strategies used by photographers may include facets that contradict consistency building, defamiliarization, the use of irony, the deliberate stimulation or frustration of a perceiver’s interpretation and the use of a known theme within a specific period placed within an unknown context. All of these strategies challenge the ocularcentric perceptions of perceivers. Creative strategies are utilized by photographers together with the patterns of identification to enable cultivated sensitive perceivers to distance themselves from the initial identification with the work and open the work up to a multitude of possible interpretations.

Cultivated sensitive perceivers use these creative strategies employed by photographers to assist in finding answers to problems brought to the fore by the creative strategies and

to produce possible hidden interpretations other than that which the meaning of the photograph initially implies. This again illustrates the interactivity between the coordinates of the interactive model. Perceivers thus look for visual clues in the work and make informed guesses about the meaning of the work of art. Not all of these visual clues need be immediately visible to perceivers, therefore they need perceptual sensitivity to pick up on these visual clues. Creative strategies prompt perceivers to review their own ideologies or worldviews and to consider other valid interpretations of the artwork. In doing that, perceivers will find themselves confronted with familiar conventions in an unfamiliar light (Iser 1978: 78). This situation assists perceivers to become creatively involved in revealing as well as perceiving the possible meanings of the photograph.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The research results that emanated from this chapter demonstrate that an interactive and creative relation between the coordinates of the aesthetic field has the potential to overcome the limitations of ocularcentrism in photography. For this interactive process to be successful, however, it is also necessary for each of the coordinates in the interactive hermeneutical model of aesthetic participation to contribute towards the formation of an aesthetic object.

The implications of an interactive process in photography show that photographers may be made aware of the fact that photography is more than just a mechanical recording of reality but may indeed be viewed as a form of art and as an interactive creative medium. By means of a hermeneutical approach, the sharing of interpretations leads to an interrelation between all the coordinates of the interactive hermeneutical model of aesthetic participation.

An interactive retrieval of meaning involves individual experiences of ideologies, morals, ethics and foreknowledge of the photographer and the perceiver, working together as a whole to ultimately result in an experience that should be capable of moving beyond merely identifying with what is portrayed in the photograph. It is not enough to merely grasp the implied meanings of what the implied photographer has suggested in the

photograph, or for perceivers to merely identify with what the experience has opened up. This again may be linked to the concepts that may be applied to what people associate with traditional photography.

Technological developments in photography aid with the creation of photographs that may elicit an interactive engagement. Through the use of digital photography, photographers may digitally incorporate strategies in the work to challenge perceivers' ocularcentric perceptions of reality. Together with the patterns of identification, identified by Jauß (1982: 159), and creative strategies employed by photographers, a balance is maintained between aesthetic distance and testing participation by cultivated sensitive perceivers to interpret a multitude of interpretations from photographs that generate the possibilities for this to occur. Interpretation, as Davey (1999: 8) rightly states, enables an understanding that there is something more to be seen than what is immediately seen before the eye.

## Chapter 3

### **Hermeneutic phenomenology as a method of analysis**

The aim of this chapter is to firstly investigate the essential features of and background to phenomenology, secondly to consider the applications and variations of hermeneutic phenomenology in photography as medium, and lastly to apply hermeneutic phenomenological analyses to practical examples in photography. The photographs are to be investigated using hermeneutic phenomenological methods in conjunction with the interactive model of aesthetic participation developed for this study. This will be used to eliminate possible inclinations to subjectivity and illustrate that the creative process is not a self-centred process, but an interactive process of engagement between all coordinates in the interactive hermeneutical model of aesthetic participation. With reference to an article by Marshall (2010: 80), the term hermeneutic phenomenology is used to refer to a research method that, through observation and interpretation of not only the art object but also art processes, determines or reveals hidden structures that underlie a particular work of art. The photographs selected for analysis in this study were produced by the author applying the creative strategies discussed in Chapter 2. These photographs were produced during the duration of the study, each step of the hermeneutic phenomenological process was carefully documented prior to the analysis and in this Chapter are presented in the hermeneutic phenomenological format in conjunction with the interactive model of aesthetic participation developed for this study.

To identify the meaning of the term phenomenology is a difficult task, as the meaning of the term is not readily agreed upon by scholars in this disparate field. For Melville (1998: 143) phenomenology is the study of essences and includes the problems associated with finding definitions to these essences. Dufrenne (1978: 53) points out that phenomenology may be viewed as an investigation into essences, for example the essence of art. The investigation into the essences of art may encourage artists to test the boundaries of art. These essences are affected through awareness and use and are grasped subjectively. Moran (2005: 4) describes phenomenology as “a *radical* way of doing philosophy, a *practice* rather than a system”, as the description of phenomena as

whatever it appears as and in the sequence in which it appears consciously to whomsoever experiences it.

The phenomenology movement began in Germany before World War I and has become an important discipline in philosophy today. The founder of phenomenology, German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), in his early experiments with the discipline, already regarded this method as “the only way of elevating philosophy to the status of a rigorous science” (Linge 2004: 130). Phenomenology opted to bring the phenomenon to expression, to avoid unwarranted constructions, to bring philosophical theories to critical examinations and to bear testament to the idea that phenomena bear its meaning within itself. The basic aim of phenomenology was to challenge that branch of philosophy that had gained wide popularity at the time — epistemology — where representation became locked up in its own world in a self-enclosed sphere (Linge 2004: 131). Most philosophical theories over the last two decades have had a phenomenological orientation. Especially art education, which has been readily accepted as a scientific discipline and where visual art practices are based, is one area where visual artists readily identify their own concerns through their perceptions (Burgin 1986: 53). Using phenomenology as a research method can be traced back to initial questions Husserl asked about philosophy during his studies of the method. Reading through these questions, one can identify the phenomenological process that takes place. Husserl poses the following questions to demonstrate the core aspects of this method: “How can I become a worthy philosopher? ... how can I execute each step of my thinking in such fashion that each further step can have a secure ground? How can I avoid every unjustified assumption and thus finally realize the ideal of rigorous science in philosophy too?” (Husserl cited in Linge 2004: 134). The common medium of all phenomenological analyses involves the analysis of the ‘thing itself’, may it be the concept of being the best philosopher, or the creation and evaluation of an artwork or a photograph.

The German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) states in an interview (Grieger 2001: 113) that one does not need to insist that one is undertaking phenomenology as such, but that one must always work phenomenologically. This statement by Gadamer is agreed upon by the author as the best approach to

phenomenology. When artists work phenomenologically, they work descriptively, creatively, intuitively and in a tangible manner. Instead of simply applying concepts in general, artists should apply these concepts in sections, sprouting from intuition and thought. As a result of the fact that perceivers listen, Gadamer explains, works of art speak to perceivers, and, because of this interaction, perceivers become involved in this circular movement, this process called phenomenology. This statement is supported by the definition statement by Husserl, who first conceived phenomenology as a discipline. Husserl described phenomenology as “the methods designed to yield accurate descriptions of how things appear to us” (Husserl cited in Melville 1998: 143-144). In terms of photography, Michaud (1998: 738) elaborated on Husserl’s phenomenology as a descriptive method; it “was a captive of the notion of the image; it describes our mental states in the way one describes a photograph — while adding the intentionality and the abstract actions which constitute the sense of these states.”

### **3.1 Essential features of and background to hermeneutic phenomenology**

In fundamental terms, a phenomenological analysis accentuates the essential part the networks of meaning play in lived experience. As indicated by Heywood and Sandywell (1999: 239), phenomenology is “the ubiquitous presence of meaning and mediation, consciousness and subjectivity in human activities and arrangements.” This is evident within artworks or photographs as well. In technical terms, phenomenology contains ‘essence’ (*eidos*) as common factor, which joins all encounters with the image or photograph (Burgin 1986: 79). Dufrenne (1973: xlvii) discusses Sartre’s and Merleau-Ponty’s description of phenomenology as “a description, which aims at the essence, itself defined as a meaning immanent in the phenomenon and given with it.” The essence is something to be discovered, an unveiling of meaning. For perceivers, the phenomenological approach emphasizes the activity of perception, the formative contribution the perceiver adds to the aesthetic environment (Berleant 1997: 32). A practical example concerning photography can be found in the analytical writings of the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1940) which appeared in *L’Imaginaire*. Sartre (cited in Michaud 1998: 733) states:

“If I am suddenly shown a photo of Pierre, the situation is functionally the same as when an image suddenly appears without any conscious desire for it on my part. Now this photograph,

if it is simply perceived, appears to me as a paper rectangle, with special qualities and colors, with shadows and light patches distributed in a certain way. If I perceive this photograph as ‘a photo of a man standing on the front steps’, the mental phenomenon is inevitably already of a different order animated by a different intention. And if this photo appears to me as the photo ‘of Pierre’, if, behind it, I see Pierre in a certain way, a certain involvement on my part is necessary in order to give life to this bit of card, providing it with a sense that it hitherto lacked. If I perceived Pierre in the photo, *it’s because I put him there.*”

Subsequently, Sartre remarks: “Occasionally the photo doesn’t function as an object and presents itself immediately as an image” (cited in Michaud 1998: 733). This statement illustrates a key element in phenomenology, namely that of intention (cf. Chapter 2.4.3). We actively intend to perceive things as we project our own worldviews onto those appearances and the perceiver may look beyond the photograph and actively perceive the image. Sartre (cited in Burgin 1986: 80) states the following about a photograph:

My intention is here now; I say: ‘This is a portrait of Peter, or, more briefly: ‘This is Peter’. Then the picture is no longer an object but operates as material for an image ... Everything I perceive enters into a projective synthesis which aims at the true Peter, a living being who is not present.

In light of the above statement by Sartre, the real object (in the present case, the photograph), therefore, present to perception, is “an ‘analogue’ of another object”, and no more or less the absent object of ‘intention’. A problem that immediately presents itself for a theory of photography based exclusively on phenomenology, therefore, would be that it would not draw a distinction between a photograph and, for instance, an image ‘seen’ in a crystal ball (another of Sartre’s examples). In fact, Barthes (in *Camera Lucida*), like Sartre, is concerned not so much with the general phenomenon of the photograph as such, but rather with the yearning ‘intentionality’ of the imagination (cited in Burgin 1986: 80).

The central motif of phenomenology means that phenomenologists could engage all forms of experience, as long as the experience was faithfully portrayed (Moran 2005: xiii). Levin (1999: 190) indicates that the two most essential methodological principles of basic phenomenology are described as ‘back to the things themselves’ and ‘accept the given only as, and within the limits that, it gives itself’. These two principles are based upon the studies undertaken by Husserl, as discussed in his work *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (1931). Linge (2004: 118) points out that Husserl referred to the concept of intention, when discussing phenomenology, as “how what is



intended is revealed, for which consciousness it is revealed, and in what form?" Hence Husserl studies the position of consciousness in relation with the object of intention.

For the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), the phenomenological method opens into ontology as well as hermeneutics and he therefore defines phenomenology as "to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the way in which it shows itself from itself" (Melville 1998: 145), e.g. the existence (meanings) of the photograph becomes analyzed in a phenomenological manner from within itself. Davey (1999: 12) argues that hermeneutics is a part of phenomenology and that there is not a separation between "perception" and "conception". Davey is of the opinion that when perceivers view a work of art, they do not immediately use phenomena such as surface planes to try and contemplate what motives can be perceived within the artwork. As with hermeneutical aesthetics, to realize the full potential of a work of art, a "fusion of understanding" and sensibility are needed. This again is a rejection of "pure seeing". Roland Barthes, in his work *Camera Lucida*, agrees with this statement, where he commented on photography as follows: "The anticipated essence of the photograph could not [...] be separated from the 'pathos' of which, at first glance, it consists" (Barthes 1984: 21). To support this claim, Davey (1999: 11-12) refers to Gadamer who argues that "pure seeing and pure hearing are dogmatic abstractions which artificially reduce phenomena" and said of Aristotle: "[He] showed that all *aisthesis* (perception) tends towards a universal *eidos* (or idea) [...] even if every sense has its own specific field and thus what is immediately given in it [...] is not universal."

In a hermeneutic phenomenological study "all is meaning when every being is seen [*visée*] as the meaning of the lived by means of which a subject opens towards transcendences" (Ricoeur 2004: 241-242). Meaning is the most explicit part of phenomenology and involves three inseparable theses central to phenomenology: (1) the phenomenological description involves meaning; (2) the subject [artist/perceiver] is responsible for the meaning; and (3) the reduction [artist/perceiver to form meanings] releases the being for meaning (Ricoeur 2004: 241-242). Ricoeur (2004: 241-242) proclaims further that the theory of the subject is the main preoccupation of the three

theses discussed, as meaning rises from these reductions which results in the phenomenological philosophy.

Heelan (1994: 368) refers to the philosophy of strong hermeneutics as hermeneutical phenomenology, “a study of how things appear (a phenomenology) and of how things and their appearances are functions of human culture (a hermeneutical phenomenology).” Heelan (1994: 368) states further that “[a] hermeneutic phenomenology is a critical study of the “thing itself” encountered as a phenomenon within the context of human life, and of how, for a certain world and community, it can become present under a structured temporal manifold of appearances. To use Merleau-Ponty’s term, it is to study how a phenomenon has “flesh in the world.” As the artist creates, he or she works phenomenologically by employing a critical study of the steps during the development of the “thing itself”, the photograph. The analysis of this development, each step, is affected by the “flesh” of the world, taking into consideration the worldviews of the perceivers as well as the artist’s own as he or she works and strategically challenges the ocularcentric worldviews of the perceiver. In the following section, the author will discuss how hermeneutic phenomenology may be applied in photography by discussing practical examples.

### **3.2 The practical application of hermeneutic phenomenology to selected photographs**

As discussed in the concluding remarks in the previous chapter, the creation of photographs that constitute an interactive retrieval of a multitude of possible meanings will contribute towards an interactive relationship between all four coordinates of the aesthetic field (cf. Figure 1). For a photograph to succeed in this regard, traditional photography is adjusted, in a sense, and there is a shift from ideas of ocularcentrism to ideas of interactivity and creative discourse.

This decisive mind-shift from ocularcentrism to interactivity and creative discourse is an important element in a phenomenological study, as each decision, once taken, guides the process as the photographer takes into consideration his or her own individual experience of ideologies, morals, ethics as well as his or her own foreknowledge together with those of the implied perceivers. To illustrate how a photographer can move away from an ocularcentric approach to photography, a hermeneutic phenomenological analysis will be applied to photography by demonstrating the author's transformation of three photographs that elicit allegorical, figurative and esoteric forms of interpretation. Each stage of the productive process is documented in detail and, to limit a preponderance to subjectivity, analyzed further by placing emphasis on the photographer's and perceivers' interactive engagement with the worldviews implied in the meaning of the work. As part of the analysis of each photograph, when emphasis is placed on a particular coordinate, that coordinate is indicated in brackets, however, simultaneously, the interaction between all coordinates is discussed, as the main focus of this study involves the interaction between all the coordinates of the interactive model.

#### **3.2.1 "The Commemoration of Matrimony as Institution"**

The photograph in Plate 3.1 shows the original photograph that gave rise to "The Commemoration of Matrimony as Institution" in Plate 3.4. To be able to interpret the original photograph, perceivers are not required to approach the photograph other than in an ocularcentric manner. Even perceivers not familiar with the occasion or even the location will be able to come to an acceptable interpretation that the photograph was plainly taken to document a commemoration of some sort, probably concerning some or other significant historic event.



Plate 3.1 “Kids laying flowers” (Original photograph)  
(Anon 2010: 1).



Plate 3.2 “The Ghost Bride” / “The Commemoration of Matrimony as Institution”  
(Phase 1)  
(M. Rowe).

Plate 3.2 introduces the ghost-like image of a bride into the original image. The perceiver is immediately confronted with a concept which is in contradiction with reality, as one would not expect to see a bride, much less a ghost-like image of a bride, at the commemoration of an event documented in a single photograph. In the initial photograph (Plate 3.1) concepts are introduced to perceivers that are consistent with their ocularcentric worldviews, for example the commemoration of a historical event. These consistent concepts form the basis to initiate the step-by-step process, known as consistency building, to elicit perceivers' empathetic identification (cf. Chapter 2.3). The photographer at this level wanted perceivers to identify on an associative level with what is depicted in the photograph, to make associations with what is immediately perceived in the image, initially one could say on an ocularcentric level. The laying of the wreaths as familiar event in itself contributes to establish consistency in perceivers' interpretation and establish associative identification (cf. Chapter 2.3) [perceiver]. To illustrate this and to further stress the significance of the event, a further group of people participating in the commemoration was layered into the composition and was placed strategically around the memorial, ultimately forming a circle around it [artist]. As the photograph depicts a wreath-laying ceremony, that which is shown in the photograph is consistent with the assumption that a group of people will be present at — in this case surrounding — the monument commemorating the event. This is consistent with the worldview depicted in the photograph [worldview]. In this photograph, however, the photographer used the ghost-like image of a bride, to contradict consistency building, as this image is used to deliberately stimulate or frustrate the perceivers' original ocularcentric interpretation of the wreath-laying ceremony as a theme. The associative identification connected with the wreath-laying ceremony is shown to be inconsistent or conflicting with associations connected to the bride as well as the context of the theme of matrimony suggested at this level in the image. As a result of this, perceivers are prompted to dissociate themselves, a process referred to in Chapter 2.3 as aesthetic distance, from the initial associative identification with the wreath-laying ceremony in order to explore other concealed motives implied in the photograph [perceiver].

The inconsistencies in terms of associations connected with the bride and commemoration as broad theme in the photograph resulted in a change of focus in the image. The focus turned towards the bride as representative of matrimony as institution as dominant theme. In light of this change in focus, it was decided to change the title of the photograph from “Ghost Bride” to “The Commemoration of Matrimony as Institution”. The latter title implies that marriage as institution is being commemorated as if it is a commemoration of what marriage once was

or represented but no longer is or represents. From the photographer's point of view, the changing of the title from "Ghost Bride" to "The Commemoration of Matrimony as Institution" serves as a clue (cf. Chapter 2.5) surrounding the interpretation of the photograph's possible meanings and to minimize unjustified interpretations of the photograph, i.e. that the ghost bride is seen literally as a spirit and not as a clue to the dominant theme of marriage [artist].

The title "The Commemoration of Matrimony as Institution" will prompt the perceptually sensitive perceiver (cf. Chapter 2.5) to recognize the title as a clue that brings the dominant theme of matrimony to the fore and may lead to or suggest ironic identification (cf. Chapter 2.3) in the photograph [perceiver]. To strengthen negative associations in the photograph, the ghost-like image of a bride layered into the composition is manipulated and made transparent; this was done by changing the opacity of the ghost-like bride layer. The ghost-like image in this instance takes the position of an apparition of the past ideals of what marriage once was and once represented [worldview]. The essential worldviews that may be associated with "bride" and "commemoration", both of which are reflected in the adjusted title, include purity, beauty, new beginnings and a commemoration of life and love. These are all a reflection of what marriage should stand for, yet ironically the appearance and presence of the ghost image stands as an apparition to suggest that in the present day, the institution of marriage has faded to a mere glimmer or hint of its former state. The formal elements added to the photograph, namely the dramatic clouds and the adjustment of the red jackets worn by the children to black, adds to the somber feeling of the photograph. This may serve as visual clues to suggest mourning and be interpreted as a bleak outlook on the future and intimately the bleak outlook on the institution of marriage, that brides and marriage are in a sense decayed to a mere apparition, thus strengthening ironic identification (cf. Chapter 2.3) in the photograph [artwork].



Plate 3.3 “The Commemoration of Matrimony as Institution” (Phase 2)  
(M. Rowe).

To strengthen the dominant theme of matrimony in the photograph, the photographer has duplicated the ghost-like image of a bride three times within the composition. The ghost-like image is firstly placed within the crowd next to the monument, secondly adjacent to the group of people layered into the composition and thirdly closer to the foreground to strengthen the idea that she (the ghost bride) wants to be remembered [artwork]. The photographer, placing herself in the position of the perceiver undergoing *aesthesis* (cf. Chapter 2.2), anticipated that as the ghost bride wants to be remembered, perceptually sensitive perceivers could anticipate that the institution of marriage, or what the institution of matrimony stood for, should also not be forgotten [artist]. The duplication of the ghost bride within the composition could further initiate the testing of participation (cf. Chapter 2.2) by perceivers. Based on conclusions drawn from Chapter 2.2, the author concluded that aesthetic identification and testing participation occurs in a back and forth movement between the aesthetically freed observer and the irreal object in which the subject in its aesthetic enjoyment can run through the entire scale of attitudes such as shock, compassion, sympathy, sympathetic laughter or tears, alienation or reflection [perceiver].

The identification pattern used by the author in this photograph, as indicated earlier, is ironic identification, in order to evoke perceivers' participation (cf. Chapter 2.1). This put forth by

the photographer is employed to exploit the predictability of perceivers to identify with the situation and acquire the perceivers' interest and subsequently their participation. To further challenge the ocularcentric perception of a portrayal of a commemoration of some sort, the monument is decayed and eroded (a visual clue that may signal the demise of matrimony as institution) and this strengthens the concept of finality or a bleak outlook on marriage. As discussed in Chapter 2.5, visual clues are accepted as visual data to interpret the world and are placed strategically in the photograph by the photographer to challenge the perceivers' own worldviews and further stimulate the perceivers to challenge their own ocularcentric perceptions. The gloomy weather on the horizon could predict that just as the transparent, ghost-like image of the bride (i.e. marriage as institution) has no future left, the monument itself is also ultimately doomed, for it too will someday be forgotten [worldview].



Plate 3.4 “The Commemoration of Matrimony as Institution” (Final)  
(M. Rowe).

To add a further twist to the photograph, a radiant bride, with colourful flowers, is layered into the composition [artwork]. The photographer anticipated that perceivers would see the radiant bride as contradicting the “death” of matrimony as institution [artist]. Previous possible interpretations may be challenged as new interpretations can be suggested in the work [perceiver]. The essential worldviews that may be associated with matrimony now



become positive, for example new beginnings, purity and beauty, and which may be seen as contradicting the negative aspects of death and somberness which are depicted in the final image (Plate 3.4) [worldview]. This possible interpretation is also formed as a result of an array of possible interpretations formed incorporating the worldviews (ideologies, morals, ethics, foreknowledge) of the photographer and the perceiver suggested in the photograph. This interactivity between the worldviews of the photographer and perceivers in the photograph illustrates the interactive workings of the proposed model of aesthetic participation proposed and discussed for this study in Chapter 1: *Notions with regard to the nobility of sight: the problem of ocularcentrism*.

### 3.2.2 “Life Swimmer”



Plate 3.5 “Untitled” (Original photograph)  
(B. Steenkamp).

The hermeneutic phenomenological analysis of “Life Swimmer” begins with the original photograph documenting two swimmers practicing for an upcoming relay event shown in Plate 3.5.

Perceivers are not required when viewing this photograph to move away from an ocularcentric interpretation of the event. One formal element that may elicit a slightly more elaborate interpretation is the element of light. The photograph was taken either early in the morning or early evening suggesting the athletes' dedication to their sport.

Firstly, the colour of the swimsuit of the swimmer poised on the podium was changed from blue to red (see Plate 3.6 below). The *colour replacement brush* in *Photoshop CS4* was used for the task. The colour tone chosen for the swimsuit is identical to the red of the lane dividers in the pool [artwork]. The formal element of colour was only used at this stage to strengthen the connection between the swimmer on the podium and perceivers, to deliberately lead the eye of the perceiver back to the figure on the podium [perceiver]. The photographer anticipated that this formal aspect in the photograph is of importance and used it to achieve compositional focus only [artist]. Perceivers are thus confronted with this prominent figure in the image and may identify with her dedication to her sport as a form of admiring identification [worldview] (cf. Chapter 2.3).



Plate 3.6 “Life Swimmer” (Phase 1)  
(M. Rowe).

As shown in Plate 3.6 above, a marble statue of Christ is layered into the composition. The prominent placing of the Christ statue in the right third of the composition, with his hands

outstretched — the left hand slightly higher than the right — towards the swimmer on the podium in an embracing or protecting gesture, suggests a religious connection between this figure and the Christ statue [artwork]. The Christ statue was specifically positioned with the left hand placed over a bright area of the clouds to further accentuate the connection between the swimmer on the podium and the Christ statue [artist]. This implied religious connection between the swimmer and Christ ultimately contributes to generate associative identification (cf. Chapter 2.3) on the part of the perceiver [perceiver]. Thematically (cf. Chapter 2.4) the Christ statue complies with the traditional conventions pertaining to the historically specific consistencies of religious portrayals. This may be explained by the inclination that followers of the Christian faith will make this association regarding the implied religious connection in the photograph, as religion in all likelihood forms an integral part of their own religious worldviews [worldview].

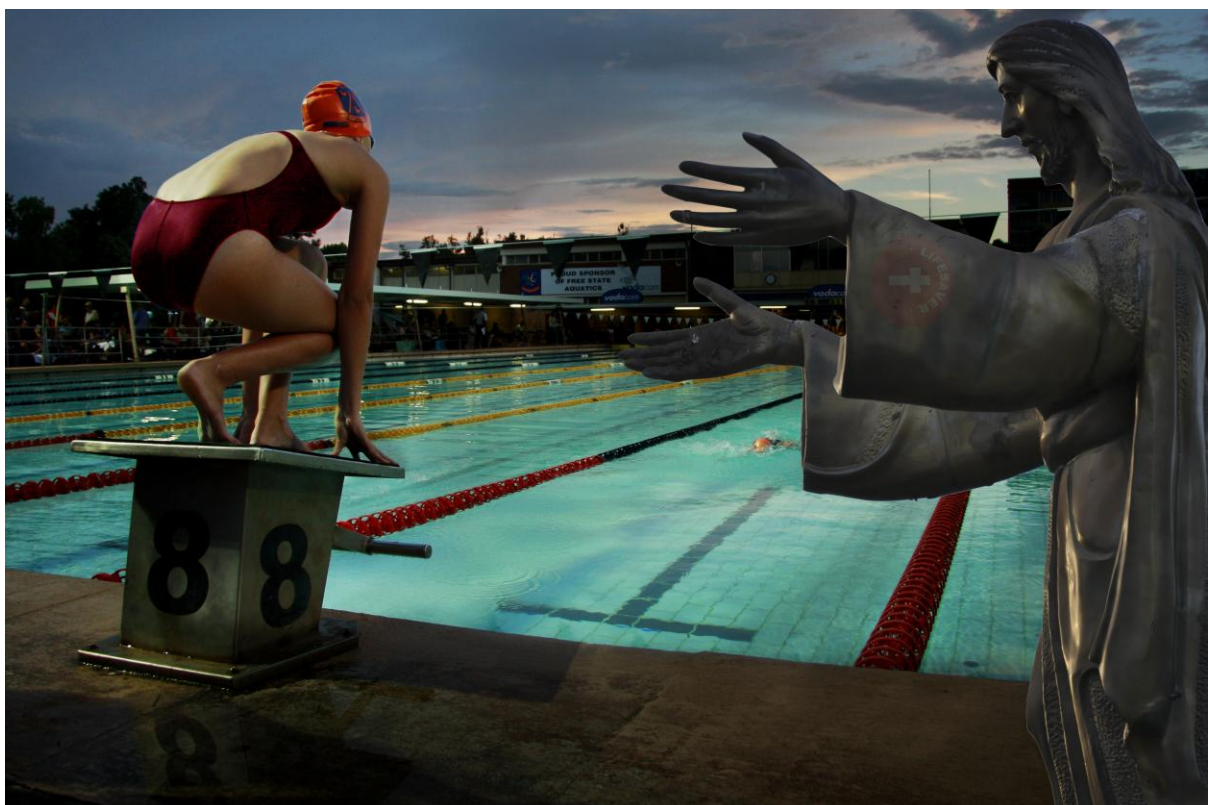


Plate 3.7 “Life Swimmer” (Phase 2)  
(M. Rowe).

Possible associations concerning the religious connection between the Christ figure and the swimmer on the podium may include that he (the Christ statue) appears to be a guardian or saviour to the swimmer on the podium [worldview]. Perceivers improve on the initial object and the aesthetic object (cf. Chapter 2.1) is formed which contains richer content than had

been initially observed in the photograph. To strengthen the facet in the composition that the Christ statue appears to be a guardian or saviour, the photographer anticipated that it is important to literally strengthen this facet in the photograph, so literally a lifesaver emblem was placed on the arm of the statue (as may be seen in Plate 3.7). This element is a subtle visual clue (cf. Chapter 2.5) in support of the consistency in the photograph and to bring about new anticipation or illusion on the part of the perceiver. To further support this consistency in the photograph, a lifebuoy was inserted behind the podium (as illustrated in Plate 3.8) to strengthen the interpretation of the Christ statue representing a guardian or saviour.

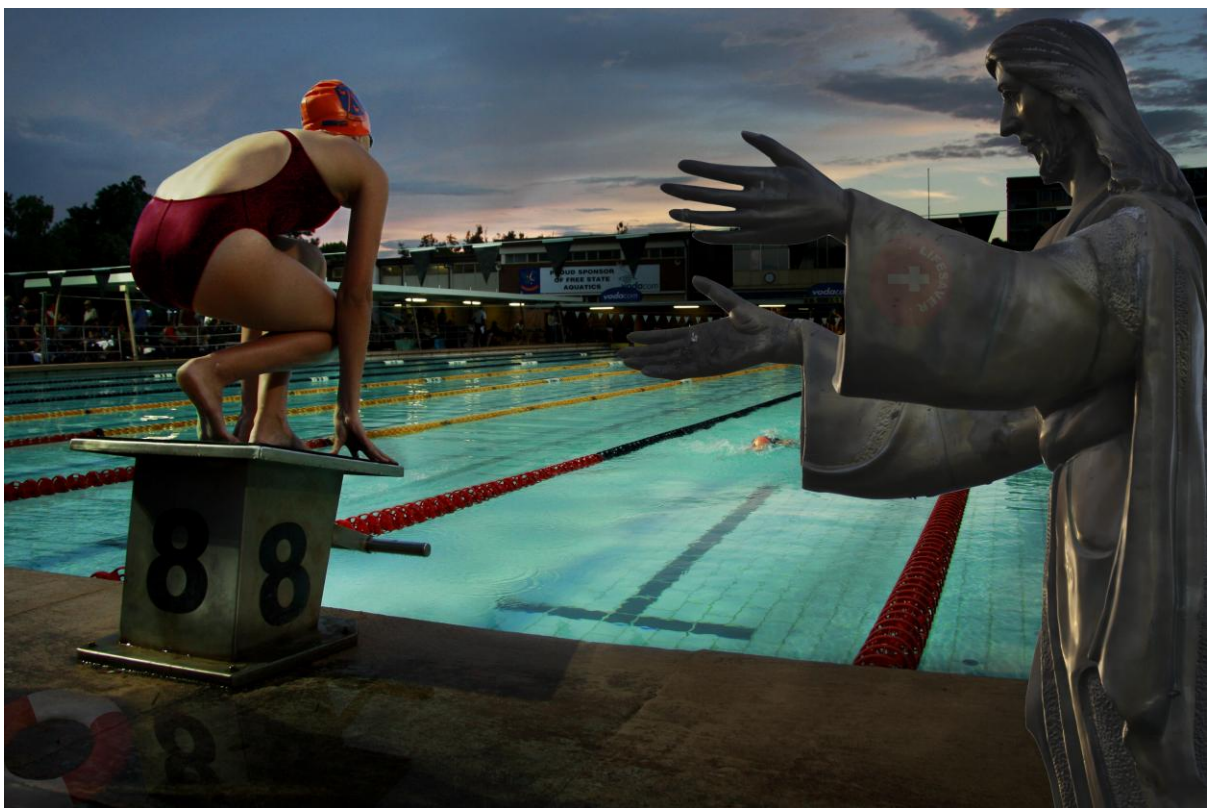


Plate 3.8 “Life Swimmer” (Phase 3)  
(M. Rowe).



Plate 3.9 “Life Swimmer” (Phase 4)  
(M. Rowe).

Placing herself in the position of the perceiver, undergoing the process of *aesthesis* (cf. Chapter 2.2), the photographer anticipated that the perceiver will realize, within the context of the photograph, that the swimmer in the pool is swimming against time and thus wanted to add a facet that would strengthen this in the photograph. The photographer first attempted to layer a bath plug into the composition, to possibly indicate that all the water in the pool will be drained in a maelstrom. However, in terms of the process of thematization (cf. Chapter 2.4), the addition of the maelstrom and bathplug turned out to be a superficial element that did not contribute to the theme or the implied meaning of the photograph. This ultimately led to the deletion (cf. Chapter 2.4) of the maelstrom and bathplug in the photograph. This phase of the hermeneutic phenomenological analysis (cf. Chapter 3.1) did, however, lead to the idea of using a stopwatch in the place of the plug and subsequently a circular stopwatch was layered into the bottom of the pool as shown in Plate 3.10.



Plate 3.10 “Life Swimmer” (Phase 5)  
(M. Rowe).

The photographer anticipated that the addition of the stopwatch would link to the race undertaken by the two swimmers in the photograph. As a stopwatch is commonly associated with a race, which the two swimmers are practicing for in the photograph, this could further refer back to the prospective race to be undertaken by the swimmers at an upcoming relay event. To strengthen the idea of “time”, the billboard at the back of the composition, which draws too much attention in the photograph, was deleted and a digital clock, displaying the digits 88:88 was added. This represented the repetition of the concept of time in the photograph.

In Plate 3.11 additional elements, namely a black cat, in the immediate foreground and a digital clock placed centrally in the background and displaying the digits 13:13, are added to the composition. The black cat and the digital timer in the background (the elements that are inconsistent with or within the religious theme or context) have deliberately been understated in order for these elements not to immediately draw the attention of the perceiver. This was done because of the importance to firstly direct the perceiver’s attention to the objects in the composition that are consistent with the religious theme and the identifiable conventions in which the photograph is exhibited. This was done with the specific aim that the expectations

and the illusions of the perceivers, in terms of thematization (cf. Chapter 2.4), are based on a traceable or detectable theme and familiar conventions which may firstly be confirmed [artwork].



Plate 3.11 “Life Swimmer” (Final)  
(M. Rowe).

The black cat walking in the direction of the swimmer on the podium has been deliberately placed in that manner to indicate a nexus or relationship between the two [artist/photographer]. Ultimately the nexus or relationship between the swimmer and the black cat is inconsistent with the religious theme with which the relationship between the swimmer and the Christ statue as recognizable, recoverable conventions (cf. Chapter 2.4) is interpreted. The superstition with which black cats are usually regarded, i.e. as a bad omen, has been deliberately exploited. The insertion of the number 13, regarded by many as an “unlucky” number, by means of the digital clock in the background, has also been deliberately placed there to further underline or strengthen and to confirm the illusions and expectations regarding possible interpretations of superstition [perceiver].

Any interpretations regarding superstition are inconsistent with interpretations regarding faith that are initially accomplished or brought about by the recoverable religious conventions

between the Christ statue, the swimmer, the lifebuoy, the emblem of the lifesaver on the left arm of the Christ statue and the "image" of the stopwatch on the bottom of the pool. In terms of the worldview of perceivers, the recoverable conventions that are interpreted as representations of faith are inconsistent with interpretations regarding the black cat and the number 13 (represented in the digital clock) that implies superstition. Perceivers with a cultivated perceptual ability (cf. Chapter 2.5), however, soon discover that the black cat and the digital clock function as visual clues (cf. Chapter 2.5) to challenge perceivers' predictable worldviews regarding faith and superstition.

According to this cultivated perceptual ability of perceivers, it is possible for them to identify with the black cat, which is out of context regarding the theme and recoverable conventions in the photograph, as a clue. As such, they are in a position to distance themselves from their initial associative identification regarding the interpretation of faith and consider other possible interpretations that are inconsistent with their worldviews. The cultivated perceptual ability of perceivers thus makes it possible for them to realize that it was the artist's creative intention not to suggest the differences, but actually the relationship between faith and superstition in the photograph.

By examining the relationship between faith and superstition by means of testing participation (cf. Chapter 2.3), perceivers realize that their initial associative identification regarding their interpretation of faith relied on a false perception of the world. As a result, the cultivated perceptual ability of perceivers may lead them to realize that in reality there is no difference between the belief in an artificial man-made icon (i.e. the Christ statue) and the artificial superstitious beliefs regarding black cats [worldview].



### 3.2.3 “Street scene” / “Next in line...”

The idea for this photograph was inspired by the paintings of Belgian painter Paul Delvaux (1897-1994) who described the climate of his street scenes as “silent streets with shadows of people who can't be seen”. To create such a unique photograph, a street scene was selected to form the base of the photograph. This photograph (Plate 3.12), taken by the author in Europe, was specifically selected for its aesthetic qualities, and more importantly, the perspective, which specifically allowed for the addition of elements to link to the anticipated thematization process (cf. Chapter 2.4) of this photograph, inspired by the style of Delvaux.



Plate 3.12 “Street scene” (Original)  
(M. Rowe).

Firstly, the photographer anticipated that for this idea to succeed, the street scene taken during the day needed to be transformed into a night scene. The original photograph was subsequently darkened, using the lighting effects of *Photoshop*; this would give the idea that the anticipated event occurs after nightfall. This was done to create a gloomy atmosphere, which is consistent with the paintings of Delvaux. To bring back some of the ambience in the photograph, the photographer added an old-fashioned street lamp to the street scene and

adjusted the lighting around this area of the building on the right of the image. This made the layering of the old-fashioned street lamp (shown in Plate 3.13) more real and appear to be part of the original image.



Plate 3.13 “Street scene” (Phase 1)  
(M. Rowe).

To further darken the feel of the photograph and to allow for a gloomier feel, cobblestones with reflections were subsequently layered into the photograph as seen in Plate 3.14, and the colour of the building on the right was adjusted to a yellow hue to be consistent with the reflection in the water puddle on the cobblestones. To further lighten the left part of the image, which was in the opinion of the photographer too dark, a shopping window, with indoor lighting, was layered into the composition; this added a warmer feel to the photograph and linked with the consistency of the warmer hue of the building on the left. Three dummies can be seen in the window display which may be seen as three individuals exhibiting what they have to offer and illustrate the way in which the female form may be used to sell a product or products. This led to the idea of including nude figures in the composition (seen in Plate 3.15), which is a further concept that Delvaux experimented with in his paintings,

which is consistent with the thematization of this photograph. In line with Delvaux's enigmatic dreamlike and displaced representation of the female nude in public environments, an attempt was made to capture these aspects as well as the vulnerable, yet bizarre sensual qualities characteristic of his nudes in this photograph.

However, the photographic medium's limitations in the transformation of the female nudes soon became evident, since unlike the nudes in Delvaux's paintings, the nudes in this photograph took on a literal ocularcentric and rather exhibitionist quality. Instead of being transformed into a distinctive aesthetic idiom, it turned out that these figures had a negative impact on the implied meanings of the photograph as a whole, which consequently necessitated an act of deletion (cf. Chapter 2.4) as part of the thematization process.



Plate 3.14 “Street scene” (Phase 2)  
(M. Rowe).



Plate 3.15 “Street scene” (Phase 3)  
(M. Rowe).

After the deletion of the nudes, the sheer desolateness of the street scene seemed to dominate the mood of the photograph. However, this desolateness on its own seemed to be meaningless without the addition of at least a solitary figure to compliment the scene as a whole. Conversely, after realization that the mere addition of any solitary figure would hardly compliment the scene as a whole, the decision was made to rather thematize this lone figure in a situation that is totally uncharacteristic and unfitting in relation to the desolate mood in the photograph. This strategy was also considered in order to experiment with the depiction of a situation that is contrary to the traditional representation of a street scene as a theme and to simultaneously challenge predictable contexts in which this theme is normally represented. After a considerable period of trial and error, the atypical figure of a bride throwing her bouquet (Plate 3.16) was added to the scene [artist]. This sudden deviation in the thematization process (cf. Chapter 2.4) promised the makings of a very unusual scene.



Plate 3.16 “Street scene” (Phase 4)  
(M. Rowe).

Even though the act of the bride blindly throwing her bouquet now added to the desolate mood in the photograph, this act in itself obviously became absurd within the context of the representation as a whole. However, the sheer absurdity of this act eventually prompted the idea to photograph and add a number of mannequins to the middle ground of the composition and to place them behind the bride as if they were present in the scene to catch the bridal bouquet [artist].

The portrayal of the bride and mannequins in this bizarre context proved to have the potential to prompt the formation of a range of aesthetic objects (cf. Chapter 2.1) mocking the custom of marriage as well as the superstition that the person who catches the bouquet will be next in line to get married [worldview]. Bearing in mind the changed context of the photograph, the decision was made at this point of the thematization process (cf. Chapter 2.4) to change the title from “Street scene” to “Next in line...”. In view of the apparent irony that the mannequins will never catch the bouquet, the idea to also make use of an ironic title was discarded [artwork].



Plate 3.17 “Next in line...” (Phase 5)  
(M. Rowe).

Plate 3.18 depicts the final stage of the thematization process. In order to prompt perceivers' ironic identification (cf. Chapter 2.3) with the scene, a black bridal veil was added to the scene and the wedding dress was changed to black, suggesting a somber, disenchanted girl who is mourning instead of celebrating her wedding day [perceiver]. As a somewhat hyperbolic augmentation of the concept of mourning, an additional mannequin also wearing a black dress and a black veil, was added to the left foreground of the composition. In order to bring about a further hyperbolic twist to this ironic scene, a number of broken domes, photographed in a cemetery, were added to the scene [artist]. Ultimately the presence of these flower domes suggest a bleak outlook on the twisted norms and values that have become customary in people's relationships in contemporary society.



Plate 3.18 “Next in line...” (Final)  
(M. Rowe).

The fact that the mannequins cannot catch the bridal bouquet and that the bride is converted into a mourner which is strengthened by further visual clues of death, namely the black veils and broken flower domes, the underlying motifs of the photograph may suggest the unfulfilment of wishes and needs. The gesture undertaken by the bride dressed in black throwing the bouquet is in a way surrendering to her own unfulfilment and perceiver’s are invited to reflect on this experience in their own personal way [perceiver].

### 3.3 Conclusion

It is not standard procedure for photographers to subject their creative process/decision-making process to hermeneutic phenomenological analysis. Such an analysis may hinder the natural progress of the creative process and photographers may rightly claim that such an analysis may become nothing more than a superficial exercise or formula that may be applied to the creation and interpretation of photographs. Within the context of this study, such an

approach proved not to be frivolous, as the hermeneutic phenomenological analysis, in some instances, contributed to the discovery of creative strategies to be applied in the photographs.

The approach taken with regard to all three photographs produced in the practical component of this study, involved placing emphasis on the combination of images and objects that explicitly bring meaning (ocularcentric meaning) to the fore and conceal figurative meaning. To succeed in this, the photographer attempted to overemphasize or underemphasize certain objects within the composition, making use of layers, which were necessary to open up the work to multiple interpretations.

Importantly for an aesthetic experience to exist, a relationship develops between the perceiver, the photographer, the worldviews brought to the work and the worldviews depicted in the work. Another strategy utilized by the photographer involved placing visual imagery out of context, for example the Christ statue in “Life Swimmer”; this triggers aesthetic participation on the part of the perceiver. The photographer thus compels perceivers to revise their personal beliefs towards considering possible interpretations of the work. This can lead to a shift in attitude entailing the consideration of other valid interpretations of the artwork. This type of depiction leads to the questioning and forming of new ideas. Perceivers are confronted with familiar situations in an unknown light and find themselves becoming creatively involved in revealing the possible meanings in the work. As perceivers will each walk away from the work with individual and different ideas and interpretations, artists in an essence give their authority over to the perceiver and relinquish control over the exact aesthetic experience perceivers may have.



## Chapter 4

### Final conclusions and recommendations

#### 4.1 Final conclusions

As a point of departure, this study took it as a given that ocularcentrism gives rise to the absence of a complete aesthetic experience. Photographs that are produced solely as a mechanical recording of reality, which may for the present be termed as “pure” photography, often limit the formation of an interactive aesthetic engagement between the photographers’ and perceivers’ implied worlds depicted in the work. In traditional photography, the photograph is viewed simply with a purely factual approach as no invitation is sent out to the perceiver to constitute an aesthetic object, only the acknowledgement of a visual image. The photograph calls for nothing more than perceivers looking at it, never seeing further than the formal properties portrayed in the photograph.

The results that emanated from this research project have revealed that the overcoming of ocularcentrism as well as the disclosure of meaning in photography depend on creative interaction of the artist, the perceiver, the artwork and their worlds. Creative participation is critical in both the generation and revelation of the implied meanings in an artwork and therefore signifies that transformation of meaning does not depend exclusively on the artist (intention), the viewer (disinterestedness) or the artwork (formalism), but rather their creative and imaginative relationship with each other.

It is evident that perceivers and artists are interconnected by means of the meaning in the artwork. Both artist and perceiver need to be observant and should have the sensitivity to ensure that their artistic sensibilities are engaged in the production and interpretation of artworks. Both artist and perceiver should consider one another during the course of creation and interpretation; their views, intentions and preconceived ideas all play an integral part in this. Furthermore, an entwinement of the personal histories (cultivated dispositions) of the artist and perceiver is required and ultimately refined during the interpretation of the artwork and similarly influence each other. Cultivated dispositions do not rely on an ocularcentric experience and interpretation of reality, but imply a sensitivity that artists and perceivers display to overcome the restrictions imposed by ocularcentrism in the making and

interpretation of artworks. Cultivated dispositions are based upon a rational ability, but are dependent upon artists and perceivers' cultivated intuitive competence. Furthermore, these cultivated dispositions are based on artists and perceivers' imagination as well as the ability to transform figurative forms of expression to expose hidden aspects of reality. Informed guesses, for example, are reliant upon artists and perceivers' cultivated dispositions.

Artists further make use of informed guesses by the perceiver to ensure participation and transformation of meaning via the perceiver; this is achieved when perceivers bridge certain interpretative gaps during the interpretation of the image which constitutes the formation of possible conjectures resulting in aesthetic objects formed. When referring to the role of the perceiver in constituting an aesthetic object, it is not meant for merely showing attention and interest toward the artwork, but to make a perceptual and even at times a physical contribution towards the artwork (Berleant 1991: 26). The interpretative gaps dispatch perceivers on a pursuit to discover meaning and to overcome the limitations of their ocularcentric ideologies.

The author has identified that constantly considering perceivers' reaction to certain elements layered into the composition may result in the interpretations of the images being or becoming forced. This may be a negative effect that may destroy the creative process, as too much emphasis is thereby placed on the main consideration of the creation of artworks to portray the subject matter in such a way as to elicit participation in the revelation of possible meaning. Keeping this aspect in mind, it can be concluded, nonetheless, that a hermeneutical approach to creative perception as an element in photography will give rise to interactive participation between all the coordinates of the interactive hermeneutical model of aesthetic participation proposed for this study. This proves the hypothesis that ocularcentric restrictions may be overcome by photographers as well as perceivers by employing an interactive hermeneutical approach when creating as well as interpreting the implied meanings in a photograph.

#### **4.2 Recommendations for future research**

Employing the working methods associated with hermeneutic phenomenology, the research findings emanating from this study have had a positive impact on the author's photographs produced specifically for this study. At the same time, nonetheless, this approach negatively influenced the spontaneity of creative decisions made during the creation process of said

photographs. On a didactic level not only the positive but also the negative aspects delineated in this study have definite implications and may form the subject for future research in the field of photography. The hermeneutic phenomenology process applied in this study, in addition, can be further scrutinized by testing the implications thereof on a didactic level, testing the impact of concepts such as spontaneity and whether this process can be used as a tool to aid students in the analysis of photographs that elicit creative involvement between photographers, perceivers and the worldviews implied in the work.

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## Appendix



“The Commemoration of Matrimony as Institution” (Final)



“Life Swimmer” (Final)



“Next in line...” (Final)