



Daguerreotypes: Fugitive Subjects, Contemporary Objects

By Lisa Saltzman

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In the digital age, photography confronts its future under the competing signs of ubiquity and obsolescence. While technology has allowed amateurs and experts alike to create high-quality photographs in the blink of an eye, new electronic formats have severed the original photochemical link between image and subject. At the same time, recent cinematic photography has stretched the concept of photography and raised questions about its truth value as a documentary medium. Despite this situation, photography remains a stubbornly substantive form of evidence: referenced by artists, filmmakers, and writers as a powerful emblem of truth, photography has found its home in other media at precisely the moment of its own material demise.

By examining this idea of photography as articulated in literature, film, and the graphic novel, *Daguerreotypes* demonstrates how photography secures identity for figures with an otherwise unstable sense of self. Lisa Saltzman argues that in many modern works, the photograph asserts itself as a guarantor of identity, whether genuine or fabricated. From Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida* to Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*, W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* to Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*—we find traces of photography's "fugitive subjects" throughout contemporary culture. Ultimately, *Daguerreotypes* reveals how the photograph, at once personal memento and material witness, has inspired a range of modern artistic and critical practices.

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Daguerreotypes: Fugitive Subjects, Contemporary Objects By Lisa Saltzman Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

“Gliding through a breathtaking range of examples in film, photography, literature, and the graphic novel that resist singular interpretations, Saltzman probes her fascination with photography through unexpected pairings from seemingly unrelated works like *Blade Runner*, *The Return of Martin Guerre*, and *Austerlitz*, and artists such as Gregory Crewdson, Cindy Sherman, An-My Lê, and Gillian Wearing, among others. While doing so, she provides a stimulating conceptual journey to reimagine the lasting power of the image while celebrating the fictions photography has always embraced. . . . Recommended.”

(*Choice*)

“Saltzman masterfully moves between historic precedents and photography’s contemporary manifestations, and, through subtle twists, demonstrates how these phenomena frequently exist as two sides of the same coin. . . . [Her] erudite and eloquent writing transports the reader through a gamut of fascinating, sometimes surprising, and always incisive examples, which challenge conventional photographic thinking in ways that respond more astutely to contemporary realities as well as historical enigmas.”

(*History of Photography*)

“Lisa Saltzman’s *Daguerreotypes: Fugitive Subjects, Contemporary Objects* distinguishes itself from most theories of photography, both in content and approach, via a lucid analysis that considers the characteristics of photography less as unique to one medium than as qualities that migrate. . . . *Daguerreotypes* will certainly be influential in the field of recent research on phenomena of transmediality, intermediality, and media crossing. Although it avoids these terms, it provides a stimulating overview on contemporary art practices that reject any fixed definition of media.”

(*CAA Reviews*)

“Saltzman’s elegant, easy prose and lovely imagery make for a genuinely engaging text, and her topic—the legacy of daguerreotypical thinking in contemporary art—is both richly layered in history and fresh as a new coat of paint. Original, clever, and convincingly argued, *Daguerreotypes* is a serious intervention into the history of contemporary art.”

(Jane Blocker, University of Minnesota)

“*Daguerreotypes* is a superbly insightful investigation that stands on the cutting edge of photography studies. By discussing photography’s referentiality as a ‘vestigial idea’ put to work in text, drawing, and video, these pages are free to explore novel concerns with the medium overlooked in our traditional focus on documentary. Saltzman’s case studies correspondingly enunciate an alternative history and critique of photography defined not by truth, reason, and perfect identity with reality, but rather narrative, emotion, fantasy, and fiction. This inventive approach offers a significant contribution to discussions of the medium.”

(Andrés Zervigón, Rutgers University)

“Saltzman’s wide-ranging study offers up an exhilarating conceptual journey through the terrain of the photographic imagination, where durational time collides with retrospection and identity confronts loss. In

this surprising concatenation of objects and practices, Saltzman deftly unfurls an unexpected and wholly original narrative that reveals the psychological functions and cultural fictions of mechanical representation in the digital age.”

(Sabine T. Kriebel, University College Cork)

About the Author

Lisa Saltzman is the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Professor in the Humanities and professor and chair of the History of Art Department at Bryn Mawr College. She is the author of *Making Memory Matter: Strategies of Remembrance in Contemporary Art*, also published by the University of Chicago Press, and *Anselm Kiefer and Art after Auschwitz*.

Users Review

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Peggy Witzel:

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The reason? Because this *Daguerreotypes: Fugitive Subjects, Contemporary Objects* is an unordinary book that the inside of the reserve waiting for you to snap the item but latter it will zap you with the secret this inside. Reading this book adjacent to it was fantastic author who all write the book in such incredible way makes the content within easier to understand, entertaining method but still convey the meaning entirely. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this nowadays or you going to regret it. This unique book will give you a lot of advantages than the other book include such as help improving your talent and your critical thinking method. So , still want to postpone having that book? If I ended up you I will go to the publication store hurriedly.

Alan Archuleta:

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