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INTERPRETATION

To interpret a photograph is to make sense of it for oneself and to learn what it means to others. For many viewers, photographs seem to be transparent, obvious, like looking at actual persons, things, and events in the world, and in little need of interpretation as images. Because photographs are made from light reflecting off of people, places, and objects in the world, they have attributes of what C. S. Peirce called "indexical" qualities. The photographic sign is caused by what it signifies, or in Roland Barthes's definition, a photograph is "that which has been." Thus, given this causal connection to reality and an inherited Renaissance style of realistic depiction, people often view snapshots, news photographs, advertising images, and art photographs as transcriptions of reality rather than as opinionated and

influential constructs bearing situated knowledge and invested expressions. Photographs are factual, fictional, and metaphorical, and need to be interpreted. The interpretation of art, for Arthur Danto, entails seeing the work as being about something, projecting a point of view by rhetorical means, requiring interpretation within a cultural context.

In Ernst Gombrich's and Nelson Goodman's view, there is no innocent eye, and by implication, no innocent camera, or viewer. According to Goodman,

the eye functions not as an instrument self-powered and alone, but as a dutiful member of a complex and capricious organism. Not only how but what it sees is regulated by need and prejudice. It selects, rejects, organizes, discriminates, associates, classifies, analyzes,

