

# JUST ADD PHOTOGRAPHY

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# Foreword

*“I have always been a firm believer in photographic experiments. Only by attempting everything personally can a photographer begin to understand the scope of photography. No picture, verbal description or how-to-do-it article can supersede first-hand experience.” (Waclaw Nowak in Bill Jay, 1971)*

A photograph can basically be three things: a document of a framed reality (“It existed”), an expression of the personality of the photographer (“I existed”) and an investigation of the medium itself (“What is photography?”). The following projects are concerned with the latter. This thesis provides an overview of my personal research into the basic elements of photography and explores how viewers respond to photography.

A total of 119 people participated in my experiments. Some were acquaintances and friends, others were complete strangers. I am grateful to them all.

I thank Marc, Nick & Pieter for their feedback and Tiene for her advice and support.

Frank Paemeleire, June 2020

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# 1. THE DILEMMA POSTCARDS

*The act of making art is the act of making many, many, many small decisions*  
*Larry Sultan*

## 1.1. INTRODUCTION

John Szarkowski (1925-2007) justly pointed to the fact that the essence of the photographer's craft is to "quote out of context". Photographs and quotes both offer a wealth of information in a flash. It's then up to the reader/viewer to decide whether or not to do something with this information. While studying the history of photography I was confronted with a lot of conflicting quotes of master photographers. A system that could randomly solve their opinions and advice dilemmas was needed.

## 1.2. METHODS

Twenty pairs of conflicting quotes were selected from a personal collection of 466 photography quotes. Postcards with the same front and back side were printed (see figure 1). On one side I wrote a quote and on the other side I wrote a conflicting quote. A stamp was pasted on both sides, I also wrote my home address on both sides. The postcards were then put in the mail.

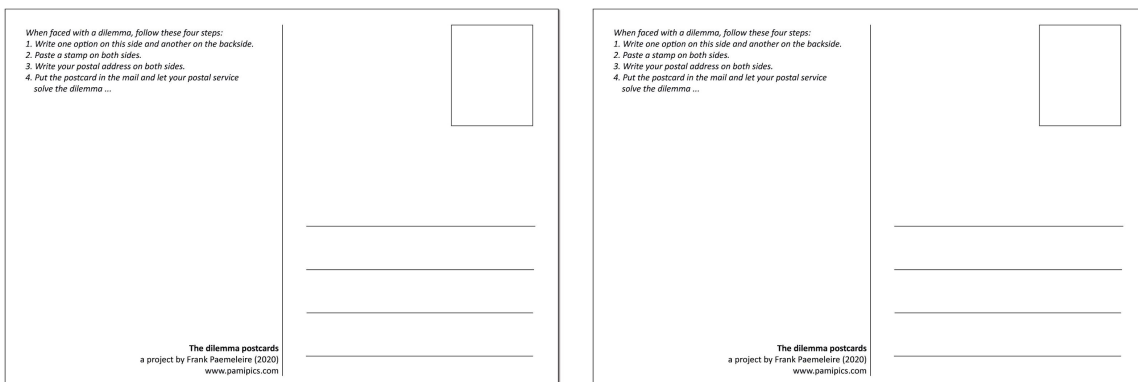


Figure 1: Front and back side of a *dilemma postcard* (Paemeleire, 2020)

### 1.3. RESULTS

Postal services only stamp one side of double sided postcards. Whatever side that was randomly chosen was considered the best opinion or advice. Table 1 shows the 20 quotes about photography (and the author that they were attributed to) that were (not) selected by the Belgian postal service *bpost*. The actual postcard of number 6 from this table can be seen in figure 2.

Table 1: Opinions and advice on photography as selected by the Belgian postal service *bpost*

Nr.	Selected	Not selected
1	First rule to be a photographer, you have to be invisible. <i>Sameh Talhamy</i>	A photograph is an expression of a relationship. <i>Susan Meiselas</i>
2	La photographie, c'est la vérité. <i>Jean-Luc Godard</i>	Every picture tells a lie. <i>Banksy</i>
3	Photography has little to do with the things you see and everything with the way you see them. <i>Elliott Erwitt</i>	If you want to be a better photographer, stand in front of more interesting stuff. Jim Richardson
4	The pictures are there, and you just take them. <i>Robert Capa</i>	You don't take a photograph, you make it. <i>Ansel Adams</i>
5	All photography is driven by a concept. <i>Oliver Chanarin</i>	Don't think about a concept too much, just go out there and shoot. <i>Shinya Arimoto</i>
6	To photograph people is to violate them. <i>Susan Sontag</i>	When I ask to photograph someone I'm paying them a tremendous compliment. <i>Amy Arbus</i>
7	I only ever take one picture of one thing. Literally. Never two. <i>William Eggleston</i>	Photographers stop photographing too soon, before they have exhausted the possibilities. <i>Dorothea Lange</i>
8	Photographers don't lie, people lie about photographs. <i>John Loengard</i>	All photography is propaganda. <i>Martin Parr</i>
9	A photograph is not an accident - it is a concept. <i>Ansel Adams</i>	Photography can be just a matter of luck. <i>Dmitri Kessel</i>

<b>10</b>	You go out and the pictures are staring at you. <i>Lee Friedlander</i>	Finding the right subject is the hardest part. <i>Mary Ellen Mark</i>
<b>11</b>	All photography is voyeuristic and exploitative. <i>Martin Parr</i>	Photography is an empathy towards the world. <i>Lewis Hine</i>
<b>12</b>	Photographers, you will never become artists. All you are is mere copiers. <i>Charles Baudelaire</i>	Photography is a transformation not a reproduction. <i>Ernst Haas</i>
<b>13</b>	The whole point of taking pictures is that you don't have to explain things with words. <i>Elliot Erwitt</i>	The photograph, irrefutable as evidence but weak in meaning, is giving a meaning by words. <i>John Berger</i>
<b>14</b>	The machine gun approach to photography - by which many negatives are made with the hope that one will be good - is fatal to serious results. <i>Ansel Adams</i>	The more rubbish you take, the greater the chances you end up with a good picture. <i>Martin Parr</i>
<b>15</b>	You basically have two variables: where you stand and when you press the shutter. <i>Henry Wessel</i>	Everything comes down to time and light. <i>John Hilliard</i>
<b>16</b>	If you're too close to events, you lose perspective. <i>Micha Bar-Am</i>	If your picture isn't good enough, you're not close enough. <i>Robert Capa</i>
<b>17</b>	Photography just gets us out of the house. <i>William Eggleston</i>	Photography is a magic thing. <i>Jacques-Henri Lartigue</i>
<b>18</b>	Black and white are the colors of photography. <i>Robert Frank</i>	The world is in color, so why not photograph in color? <i>Mitch Epstein</i>
<b>19</b>	Only photograph what you love. <i>Tim Walker</i>	Take pictures of what you fear. <i>Diane Arbus</i>
<b>20</b>	If a picture is good, it tells many different stories. <i>Josef Koudelka</i>	Photos have no narrative content. They only describe light on surface. <i>Garry Winogrand</i>

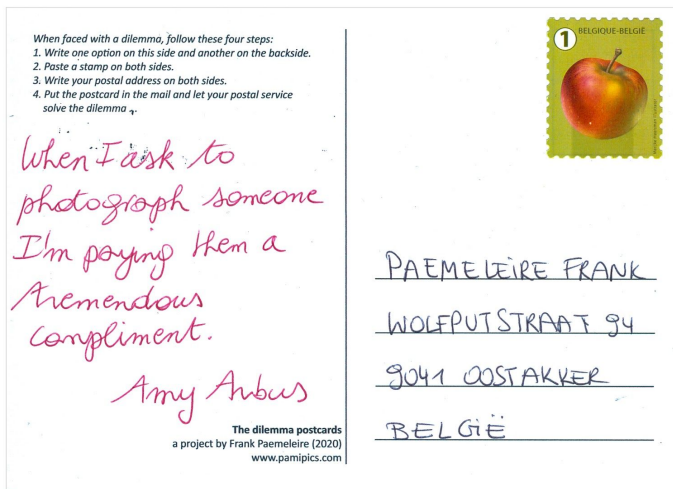


Figure 2: Dilemma postcard number 6 with a photography quote by Susan Sontag (1933-2004) and Amy Arbus (°1954). At the top is the selected quote, at the bottom the unselected one.

## 1.4. CONCLUSION

There are as many ways to practise photography as there are photographers. Everyone has to find their own way, knowing that there is no originality, only authenticity. I firmly believe that reading about photography can make you a better photographer, but as Bruce Gilden puts it: “You can learn from me, but you can’t be me”.

For solving all kinds of professional or personal dilemmas *The dilemma postcards* (Paemeleire, 2020) can be used.

## 2. CAN YOU PLEASE TAKE MY PICTURE?

*Every portrait is a self portrait*  
*Todd Hido*

### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

When street photographer Garry Winogrand (1928-1984) was confronted with a man that told him not to take his picture, he reportedly replied with “It’s not your picture, it’s my picture!”. Whether this situation actually happened or not, it points to interesting discussions about authorship and the relationship between the photographer and the model.

In traditional street photography you either steal a portrait (which I don't like because you are invading a person’s privacy ) or ask for permission (which I don't like either because it feels uncomfortable and nearly always creates an artificial pose). For this experiment I explored the dynamics of the reverse situation of classic street photography: the subject as a photographer and the photographer as a subject.

### 2.2. METHODS

On 12 November 2019 I stopped people in the streets of central Antwerp (population ca. 525.000). Without introduction I asked them (in Dutch) "Could you please take my picture?", while offering them my camera. For this experiment I used a Fujifilm X-100 which has a fixed focal-length lens of 23mm. The camera was set to manual mode.

Concerning the pose, I played the role of “the smiling tourist roaming around with his trolley case”. By standardising my pose, the different photographic approaches by the passers by would be more apparent.

### 2.3. RESULTS

I approached 36 people between 3:30 pm and 4:37 pm. Some people were surprised, some hesitated but nobody refused to take my picture. In fact most people were very eager to take my portrait and even thanked me afterwards.

The 36 photographers took 63 photographs all together. Most people asked for my approval immediately after taking the picture. I always replied, without looking at the result with “You are the photographer! If it’s okay for you, it’s okay for me.”. 45% of the photographers spontaneously took more than one photograph. Some people took 3, 4 or even 5 photographs until they were pleased with the result. Chart 1 shows the number of photographs taken by the photographers.

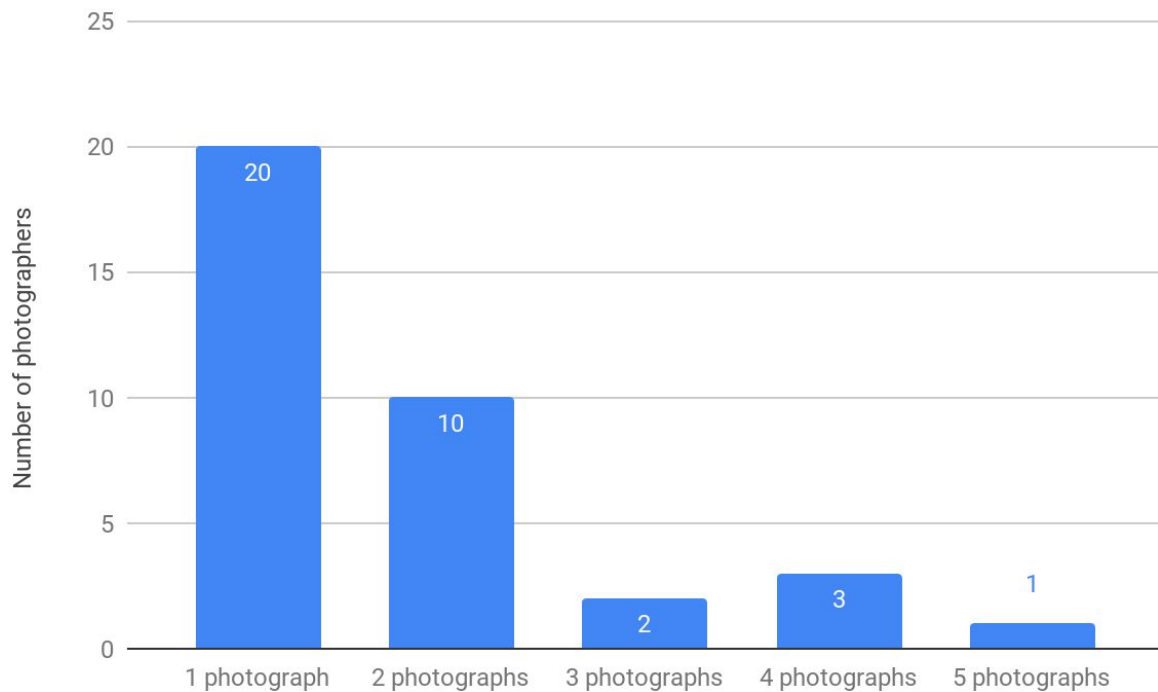


Chart 1: The number of photographers that took 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 portraits of me

A picture of every photographer can be found on the following pages (in chronological order, left to right). When a photographer took more than one picture, the last picture is shown.



















## **2.4. CONCLUSION**

These photographs are witnesses to moments of co-creation of which the climax lasted between  $1/4000$  and  $1/120$  of a second. If every portrait is indeed a self portrait than these pictures are in fact 36 portraits of anonymous passers by. Those brief encounters with people - that presumably will never cross my life again - are forever captured in a lasting present.

## 3. DEAR FRANK, I FIND YOUR PICTURE ...

*We find your approach original but we don't understand its meaning  
(anonymous feedback that was given in this experiment)*

### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2019 I undertook a 'Grand Tour 9041', a visual exploration of my immediate environment. It took me 29 hours and 37 minutes to walk both sides of every street in my town Oostakker (postal code 9041). I photographed everything that took my interest and enjoyed the art of slow walking and the act of picture taking.

I selected 30 photographs and made 3.000 picture postcards of them (see figure 3). This project was my thesis for the first year of the photo art course at the Academy of fine arts in Ghent (2018-2019). The reactions from friends, fellow students and teachers were positive.

But I started to wonder: how would complete strangers react to my picture postcards?

### 3.2. METHODS

I wrote on three hundred and sixty-five postcards my home address and a sentence to complete: "Dear Frank, I find your picture ...". In the accompanying letter I stated that I was looking for honest feedback on my photographs by people that knew neither me or the place where these were taken. Both positive and negative feedback was appreciated.

All the postcards were stamped and, with the help of friends, secretly put in random mailboxes. No postcards were delivered in the province where they were taken. We distributed the postcards in Zeeland (the westernmost province of the Netherlands) and three Flemish provinces (West Flanders, Antwerp and Limburg).



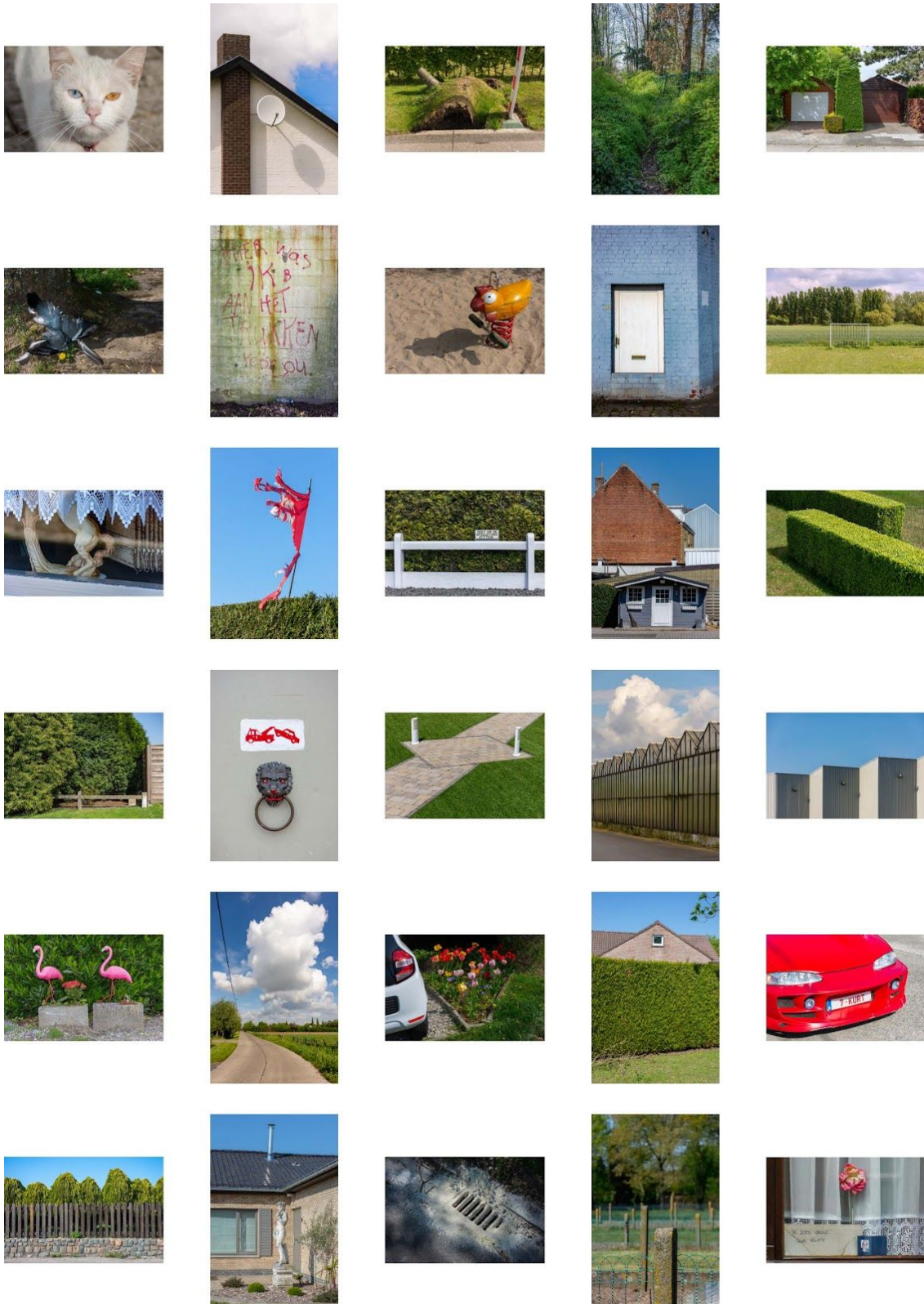


Figure 3: The thirty postcards that were used in this feedback experiment

Figure 4 shows some examples of houses in the province Limburg (Belgium) where the postcards were put in private mailboxes (photographs by Nick Moons).



Figure 4: Some houses where the postcards were put in private mailboxes (pictures by Nick moons)



### 3.3. RESULTS

There was a response rate of 13,7 %. Fifty people took the effort to write their personal opinion on a postcard and send it back. The longest reaction consisted of 63 words, the shortest opinion was only 2 words. Chart 2 shows the distribution of the different opinions of this test group. Five respondents (10%) gave no specific opinion or wrote that the photograph didn't evoke any emotion. Four people (8%) returned a completely negative opinion. Seventeen respondents (34%) gave a combination of positive and negative feedback. And finally twenty-four respondents (48%) expressed a completely positive opinion. Two examples of each category can be found on the next pages.

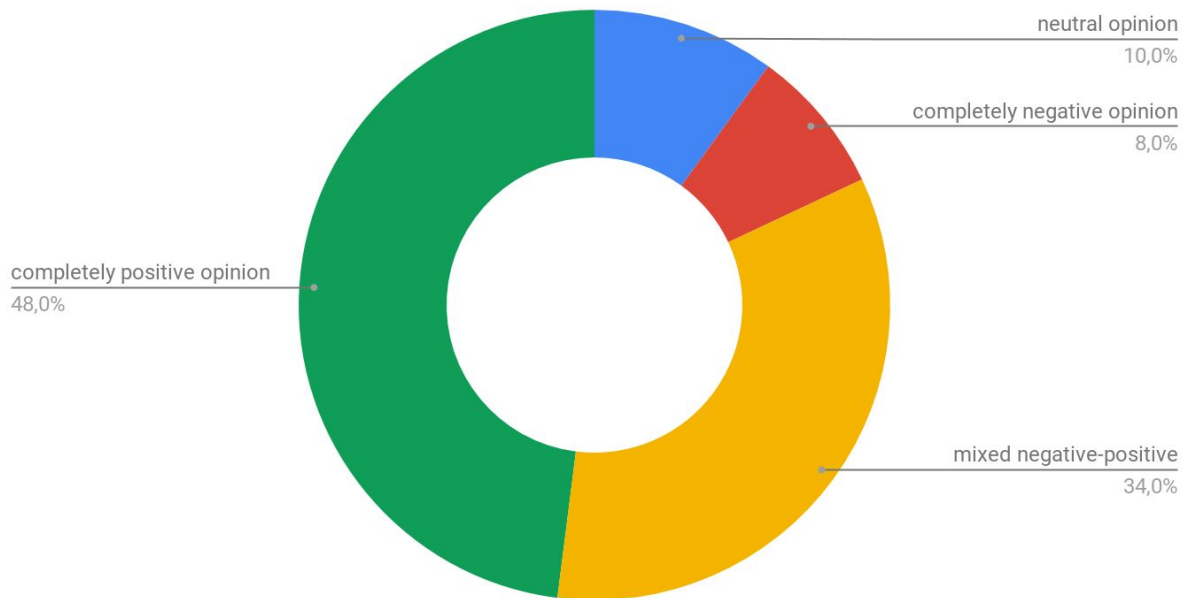


Chart 2: Distribution of the opinions in the test group (48 respondents)

## The longest opinion



Dear Frank, I found your picture ...

*is gruesome, threatening, horrible.*

*Something shielded! Reminds me of the war.*

*I also see border markers in it or separate areas.*

*It can leave a great impression on humanity.*

*It does something with the past, present and future.*

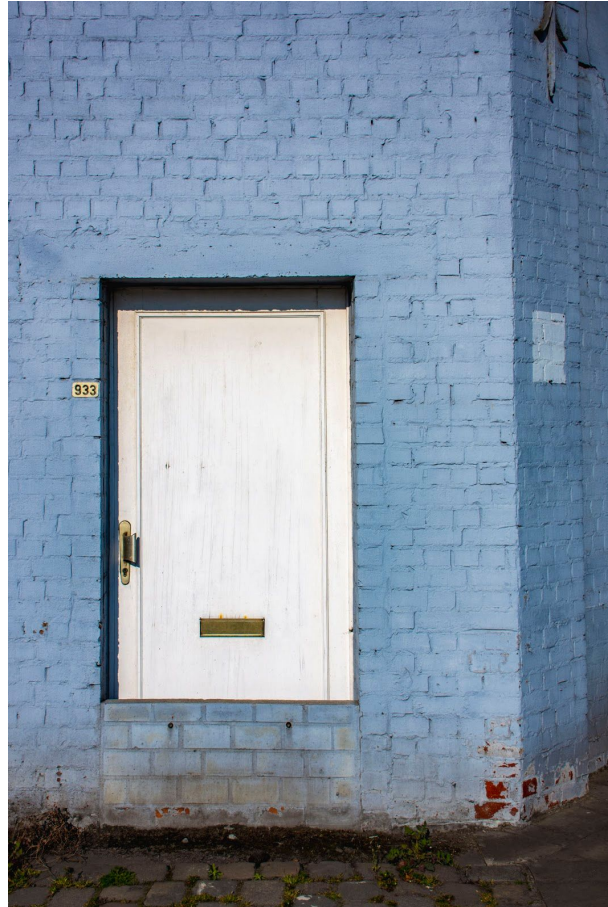
*Life does not end with death. For a Christian this is infinite.*

*Really Belgian, cannot be more Flemish.*

*Repent !!! Frank, Jesus is coming back soon.*

*End of time.*

## The shortest opinion



Dear Frank, I found your picture ...

*very special!!!*

**Example of a neutral opinion (1)**



Dear Frank, I find your picture ...

*this photo is neutral.*

*It doesn't move me.*

*Nice for those who know the fence,  
but not for me.*

**Example of a neutral opinion (2)**



Dear Frank, I find your picture ...

*busy by the many buildings (roofs).  
It is also a rather neutral impression for me.  
It does not make me happy or sad.*



## Examples of a completely negative opinion (1)



*[the graffiti reads: here I was jerking off for you]*

Dear Frank, I find your picture ...

*HAS NO ADDED VALUE.*

*In my opinion, just some fumbling on a wall. Nothing 'artful'.*

*The message is also not worthy to be recorded.*

*If you had told me that this photo was taken by a 10-year-old child,*

*I would have believed you.*

## Examples of a completely negative opinion (2)



Dear Frank, I find your picture ...

*reactions of our family:*

*terribly ugly*

*ugly car*

*who on earth photographs a broken car?*

*in my face*

*what is this?*

*A question: what is the purpose of this card, no message?*

**Example of a mixed negative-positive opinion (1)**



Dear Frank, I find your picture ...

*has something.*

*The composition should perhaps be a little more 3/4.*

*But it is a nice photographic image.*

*It exudes tranquility.*



**Example of a mixed negative-positive opinion (2)**



Dear Frank, I find your picture ...

*personally not that special,  
but it is well taken.*

**Example of a completely positive opinion (1)**



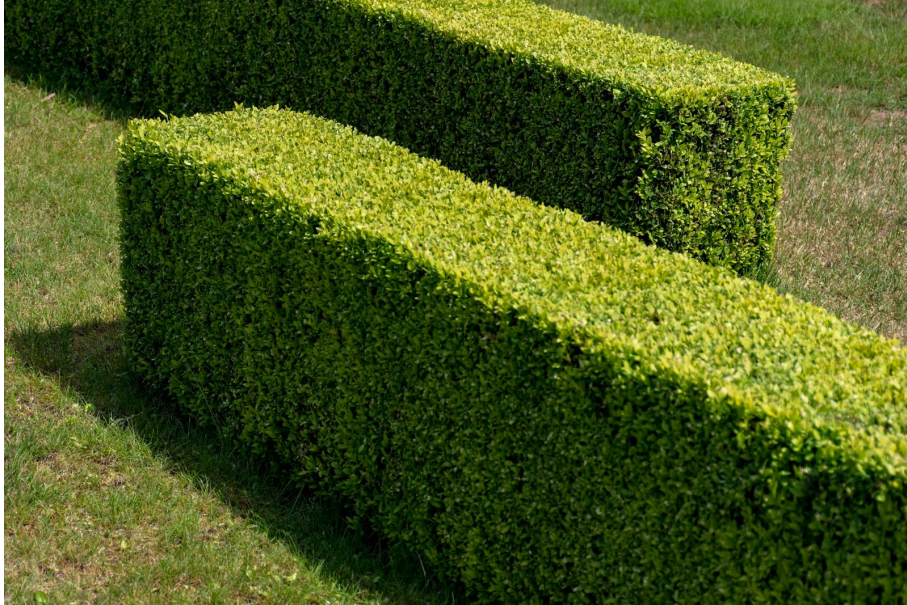
Dear Frank, I find your picture ...

*a happy picture.*

*Reminds me of a nice sunny afternoon.*

*I am not a connoisseur so I don't know if everything is perfect  
but at least it makes me feel good!!”*

**Example of a completely positive opinion (2)**



Dear Frank, I find your picture ...

*nice because the different colours green  
shine and the lines are beautiful.*

*Go on like this!*

### **3.4. CONCLUSION**

As a photographer in training it is important to get used to the fact that when you show your work everybody will have a opinion about it. Although I have to take in account that a certain amount of people tend to give socially desirable answers in research, I was pleased to see that 82% of the test group gave partially or completely positive feedback on the postcard.

It would be interesting to replicate the experiment with 30 new, more recent pictures and ascertain if I'm pleasing my potential audience more.

## 4. KLECKS

*We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are*  
*Anais Nin*

### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) stated that the artist only performs one part of the creative process and that it is the onlooker who completes it. In order to investigate this second process, I used a stimulus similar to the inkblot tests of the psychiatrist Hermann Rorschach (1884-1922). Rorschach - whose nickname at school was *Klecks* ('inkblot') - was fascinated by the reactions of his patients when he showed them a inkblot and asked: "What might this be?". All his life he doubted whether he would pursue a career in medicine or the arts.

### 4.2. METHODS

The photograph in figure 5 was sent as a picture postcard to twenty-four participants together with the question "What does this photograph remind you of?". All the participants were friends or acquaintances and had never seen this photograph before. There were men and women in the test group and their ages ranged from 25 to 80 years. They were asked to send their associations back anonymously.

The stimulus was a very personal photograph that I took in the bedroom of Yolande, my father's older sister. She never married and after her parents died in the 80s, she lived alone for 30 years. I was her godchild and spent many pleasant summer holidays with her. After she passed away in 2013, we emptied the big house. It was then that I spotted the strange stain on the vinyl floor next to her bed. A close female friend of hers told me that it was the result of vomiting repeatedly at night. Apparently she had been ill for a long time and had hidden this for us.





Figure 5: Stimulus used in this experiment that was accompanied by the question:  
“What does this photograph remind you of?”

### 4.3. RESULTS

Twenty-three of the twenty-four participants returned their associations, which corresponds to an excellent response rate of 96 %. In what follows we discuss a number of analyzes.

#### 4.3.1. Contradictions

The photograph was not read unambiguously at all and a lot of downright contradictory reactions were given. Some examples [note: the numbers in brackets refer to the participant]:

- *Concerning the location*: “probably a Flemish living room” [15] versus “I also don't have the feeling that I am in Belgium, but rather in another country.” [18] versus “in Paris” [2]
- *Concerning the place*: “a bedroom” [9;12;13;21] versus “a very old hotel room” [2] versus “a living room” [15]
- *Concerning the time*: “Flemish living room furnished in the 50s” [15] versus “carpet in the 60s” [6] versus “bedroom in the 90s” [13]
- *Concerning the action that took place*: “spilling a liquid” [3;10;12;13] versus “urinating” [4;12] versus “some sort of crime” (like a fight, prostitution or abuse) [10;15;18]

#### 4.3.2. Emotions

Seven participants (30%) explicitly referred to an emotion. Five of these were negative: “I would rather not be there” [2], “it evokes negative emotions” [10], “infection anxiety” [12], “poverty” [13] and “a restless feeling” [18], Two participants finally mentioned the word “nostalgic” [8;16].

#### 4.3.3. Content categories

The associations of the participants were then divided in four content categories. The categories are described and illustrated further in the text. The distribution (in percentage) can be found in chart 3.

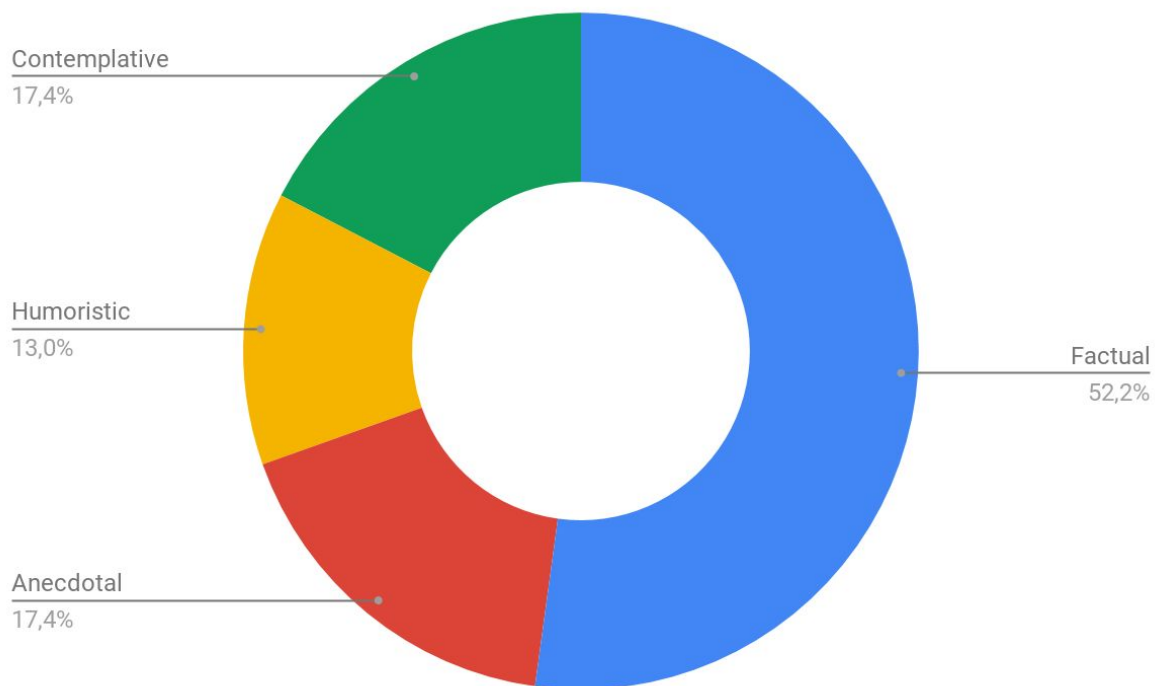
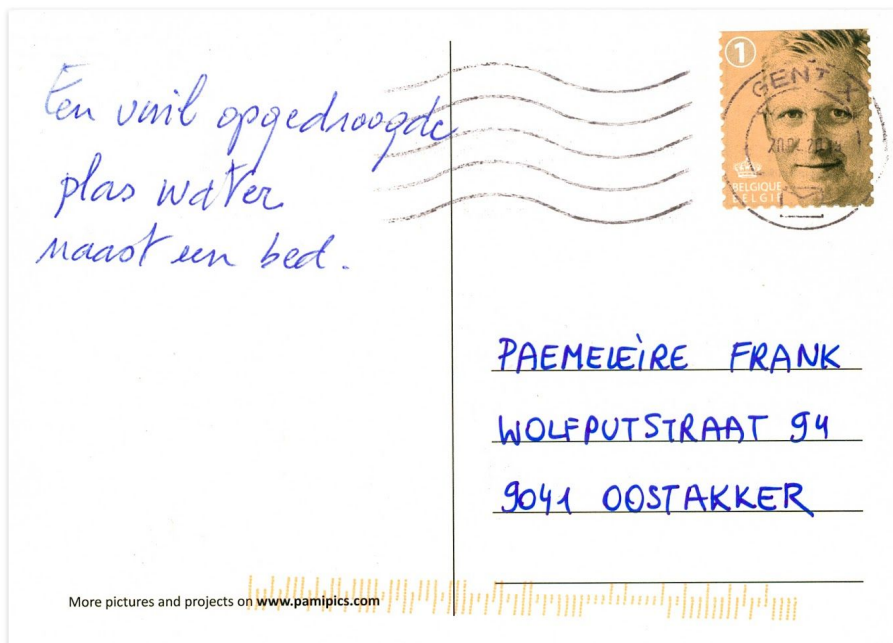


Chart 3: Associations of the 23 participants divided in four content categories

#### 4.3.3.1. Factual content

- Definition: the viewer comments on what is actually shown in the photograph, with little personal associations or interference of imagination.
- Number: 12 reactions (52,2%)
- Example: "A dirty dried puddle of water next to a bed." [9]





#### 4.3.3.2. Anecdotal content

- **Definition:** the photograph evokes the remembrance of a specific situation that the viewer has experienced.
- **Number:** 4 reactions (17,4%)
- **Example:** "Your photograph reminds me of a vacation in France, 2003. We were in the car on a highway and I urgently had to go to the bathroom. We stopped at a toilet whose walls were completely smeared with feces." [19]



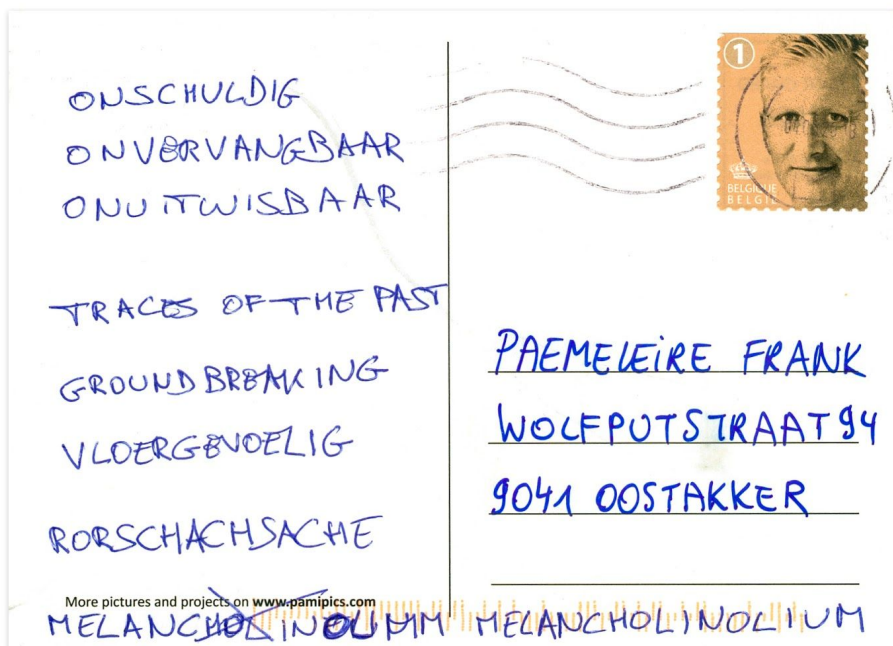
#### 4.3.3.3. Humoristic content

- Definition: the viewer uses humor that is triggered by the objects in the photograph and by doing so doesn't reveal any personal thoughts.
- Number: 3 reactions (13%)
- Example: "Damn! I spilled my coffee." [3]



#### 4.3.3.4. Contemplative content

- Definition: the viewer shares his train of thoughts about the photograph.
- Number: 4 reactions (17,4%)
- Example: "Innocent. Irreplaceable. Indelible. Traces of the past. Groundbreaking. Floorsensitive. Rorschachsache. Melancholinolium." [22]



#### 4.3.4. Pareidolia

There were also many examples of the *pareidolia* phenomenon in the reactions. Pareidolia is “the tendency for incorrect perception of a stimulus as an object, pattern or meaning known to the observer” (for example: seeing shapes in clouds) (Wikipedia, 2020). The previously mentioned inkblot test uses pareidolia to gain insight into a person's mental state.

Table 2 shows the interpretations that were extracted from the reactions of seven participants (30%). Seven different objects were seen in the stain. The only object that was mentioned twice was sexual in nature.

Table 2: Pareidolia phenomenon

<b>Number of reactions</b>	<b>Interpretation of the shape of the stain</b>	<b>Serial number(s)</b>
2	a male genital organ with a lot of pubic hair	4;11
1	a tree	17
1	the outline of a dead animal	17
1	a mushroom from Super Mario	7
1	the contour of Africa	8
1	a map of the world	13
1	Spain	23

#### 4.3.5. Cause of the stain

No less than 14 participants (61%) wondered overtly what caused the stain on the floor. Eight different options were given, they can be seen in table 3. The last one corresponds with reality.

Table 3: Interpretation of the origin of the stain

<b>Number of reactions</b>	<b>Probable cause of the stain</b>	<b>Serial number(s)</b>
5	coffee	3;10;12;13;20
2	urine	4;12
3	blood	10;21
1	feces	19
1	soda	7
1	water	9
1	mold	2
1	vomit	5



#### 4.4. CONCLUSION

Although photographs are rooted in reality and basically show the same thing to everybody, viewers read a picture in their own way. This openness to interpretation might be the key to an interesting photograph or as Josef Koudelka puts it: "If a picture is good, it tells many different stories".

I have to be aware that approximately half of the viewers are focused on what they actually see in a photograph and not what it might mean. They treat the photograph as if it were reality duplicated, a phenomenon Clive Scott (1999) describes as 'the photographic trap'. In this group of viewers their imagination wasn't triggered by the image.

"As a photographer, you quickly discover that photos do not explain much, but are very good at showing things", wrote Marc Steculorum (2019). Personality traits, previous experiences and the context in which the photograph is seen all shape how people give meaning to them. As a photographer I can't prevent the viewer to have personal associations while seeing my photographs but I can guide the viewer in the way they approach my work, for example by adding language. Even then "it is the onlooker who has the last word" (Marcel Duchamp).

## 5. LIGHT, TIME AND [REDACTED]

*Photography is as much about what you leave out as what you put in*  
*Alec Soth*

### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

According to John Berger (1926-2017) light and time are the primary raw materials of photography. In this project I added another parameter: my own weight. Starting on January the first 2020, every morning -immediately after getting up- I stepped on a scale and took a square picture with my mobile telephone. I performed this ritual for one hundred consecutive days.

When the project was finished, I printed the photographs in the classical Polaroid style (see figure 6). I had no idea how I could show this series of 100 straightforward photographs. On the one hand I wanted to give the potential audience some context to understand the creation process and to guide the viewers on how to approach the work. On the other hand I wanted the project to be open to personal interpretation.



Figure 6: The hundred photographs that were used in this project

## 5.2. METHODS

In order to find solutions for this balancing act between control and openness, I consulted the early history of photography.

### *Control*

Two interventions were applied to guide the viewer. First I wrote on each photograph the date it was taken, then I organised the photographs in a chronological order in a grid structure.

This was inspired by the work of Eadweard Muybridge (1830-1904), who was a pioneer in using a grid in photography. Figure 7 shows the work ‘Ascending Stairs’ (1884) which was published in *The Human Figure in Motion* (1901). In this book he examined human movement through thousands of photographs that are all laid out in a grid format. Conceptual artist Sol LeWitt was - after encountering this book - fascinated with the grid for nearly five decades (Hwang, 2005). He praised the grid because it eliminates visual hierarchy and makes a kind of order where all of the spaces and pieces are of equal importance.

Many photographers like John Hilliard, Anton Kusters, David Hockney, Hans Eijkelboom, Bernd & Hilla Becher, Paul Kooiker, Ger Dekkers and Hans-Peter Feldmann, have used the grid successfully to present their work.

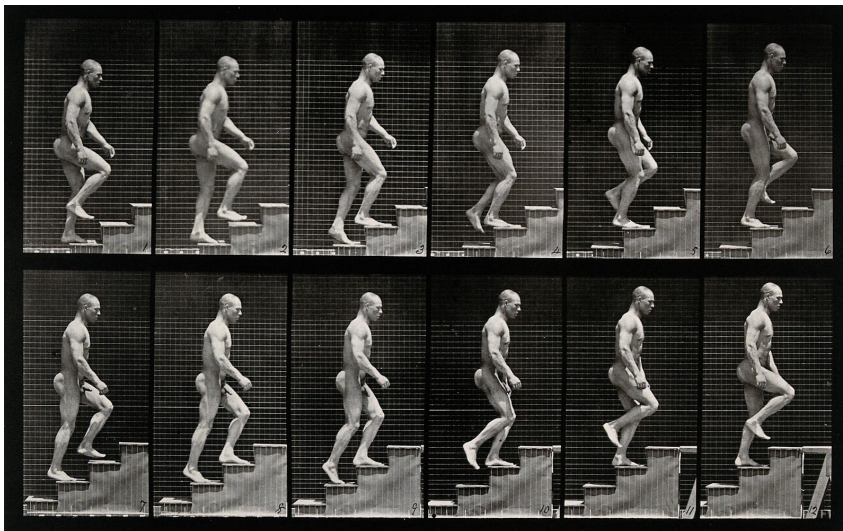


Figure 7: *Man ascending stairs* (1884) by Eadweard Muybridge (public domain)

## *Openness*

Photography shows us in great detail things from other lives, other places and other times. As such it “fuels our voyeurism”, as Vicki Goldberg (2010) puts it. The best way to arouse curiosity is not to show everything and let the viewer fill in the blanks. So I used a marker to make the weight on the photographs illegible. This creates a certain tension because the purpose of the series is now definitely not about showing someone's weight evolution. The viewer himself has to add meaning to this voyeuristic collection. What exactly do we see here: Shame? The urge to gather? Time-lapse photography? A visual diary? An eating disorder? Exhibitionism? Joke art? Functional photography? Boredom? An obsession? Wonderful senselessness?

This intervention was inspired by the biography of commercial New Orleans photographer Ernest Joseph Bellocq (1873-1949). After his death glass negatives of his intimate photographs of New Orleans prostitutes (‘the Storyville portraits’) were discovered (see figure 8). What was strange is that “an unknown hand had scratched many of the women's faces from the fragile emulsion” (Rose, 2011). There are many speculations about who did this and why and when it was done, but the reason for this scratching remains a mystery until today (see Waguespack, 2015).



Figure 8: Photograph of a glass negative by Ernest Joseph Bellocq (1912) that was deliberately damaged (public domain)

### 5.3. RESULTS

The final 10x10 presentation can be seen in figure 9 (overview), figure 10 (detail) and figure 11 (close up).



Figure 9: Final presentation of the 100 photographs (overview)





Figure 10: Final presentation of the 100 photographs (detail)



Figure 11: Final presentation of the 100 photographs (close up)

## **5.4. CONCLUSION**

The photographer is always balancing between describing and suggesting, between control and openness.

Grids are intriguing ways to organize visual information. Photographs that are placed in a grid have equal importance and beg for comparison. The viewer is stimulated to look for differences and similarities, which automatically increases the time spent with the work.

The intervention of the photographer to draw on a print emphasizes that we are watching a physical object, a photograph, and not the real thing. In this way it breaks traditions of “the invisible method of photography”, as Isabel Lea puts it. This stimulates the viewer to think about the motives of the photographer rather than what can be seen in the photograph.

## 6. RANDOM.ORG

*Once the picture is in the box, I'm not all that interested in what happens next.  
Hunters, after all, aren't cooks.  
Henri Cartier-Bresson*

### 6.1. INTRODUCTION

Photographers put a lot of effort in selecting, combining and sequencing photographs. That's how they are usually taught in art school to build up a narrative in a series of photos. Bruno Ceschel (2005) for example advises to group and ungroup photos by subject, theme, aesthetics, color or composition until "you have begun to make sense of the work". This is a slow and conscious process with endless possibilities.

Artists associated with Surrealism on the other hand embrace the element of chance. Chance represents for them "a release from the constraints of the rational world", as Matthew Gale puts it. Their spontaneous expressions come about without the interference of the mind and therefore are means to express what is going on in the subconscious mind, according to Sandra Kletter and Kytra ter Veer.

In this experiment, I wanted to test what would happen if randomness assisted me with the editing of my photographs.

### 6.2. METHODS

Two groups of 15 individual photographs were selected from my archives. To guarantee that these pictures had no logical connections to each other, none of them were taken in the same place or on the same date. Each photograph in both groups was given a number. I used the tools on RANDOM.ORG ([www.random.org](http://www.random.org)) to randomize in three different stages of the process.

RANDOM.ORG offers true random numbers because its randomness comes from atmospheric noise. The algorithm was made by Dr. Mads Haahr of the School of Computer Science and Statistics at Trinity College (Dublin, Ireland).

First each item of group 1 was randomly combined with an item of group 2. This was done with the 'list randomizer' tool. Then the order within each duo was randomly assigned (which picture was on the left). This was done with the 'random integer set generator' tool. Finally the order of these duo images in the series was determined at random. This was done with the 'random sequence generator' tool.

### **6.3. RESULTS**

The final series can be seen on the following pages. The viewer is invited to create his own narrative for each duo and the series as a whole.





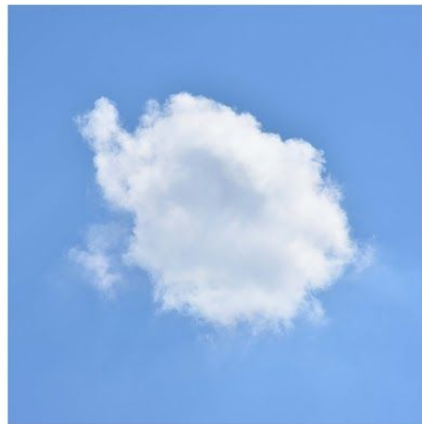








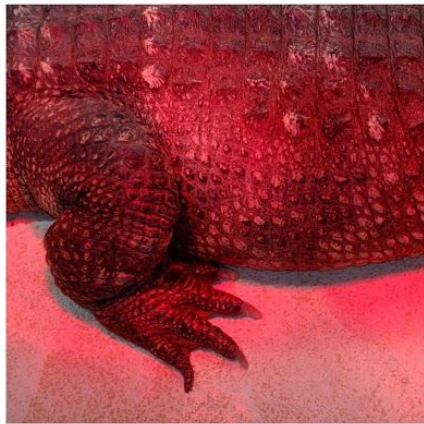






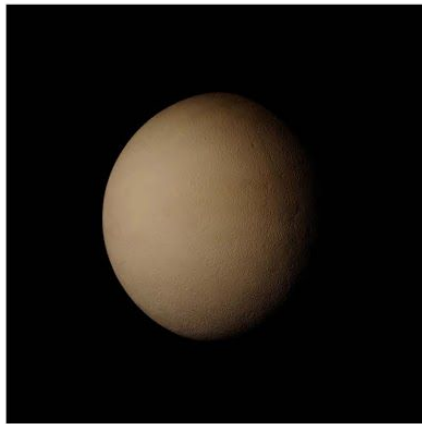


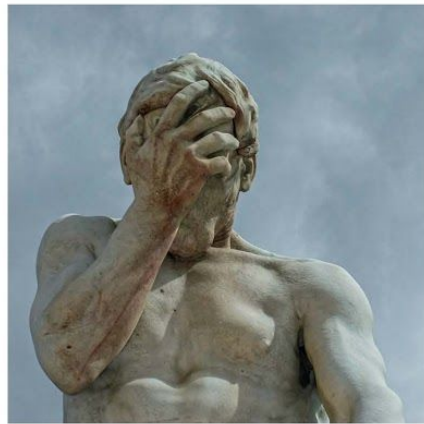


















## **6.4. CONCLUSION**

Photographers anno 2020 produce more pictures than ever. They are often emotionally attached to their own photos and the context in which they were made. This results in the fact that “photographers are lousy editors” (Maggie Sherwood). Bruno Ceschel (2005) recommends to ask for advice from trusted colleagues, friends and editors in the editing of photographs. We add RANDOM.ORG to this list. Its algorithm can save photographers a lot of precious time, which they can devote to actually taking new photographs. By making new and unexpected combinations, RANDOM.ORG can also create a narrative content open to interpretation.

But in fact there was no true randomness in this project because the selection of the pictures was done purposefully. It would be interesting to also use randomness in the selecting phase of editing a series. A computer program could then randomly select pictures from my digital photo archive. RANDOM.ORG could do the rest of the editing as shown here.

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**Photography?  
I don't see any reason why not.**

*André Breton (1896-1966)  
Manifeste du surréalisme (1924)*