The Photographed Body & Sexual Identity

in Berlin

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Utrecht University
Academic year: 2016-2017
Cultural Anthropology and development studies

Bachelor project:
The Photographed Body
& Sexual Identity

Research Location: Berlin, Germany
Research Period: February 2017 – Mid-April 2017

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Introduction

"Art has always evolved faster than society, and it will continue to do that."

- Laetitia Duveau for Nylon Magazine 11/2016

co-founder of Created by Girls, an all-inclusive art platform in Berlin

This fragment by Laetitia Duveau illustrates how the arts reflect on contemporary society and shape it along the way. She states that within this reciprocal process, the arts tend to evolve faster than society. This raises questions about how this progressive perspective of the art scene could then tell something about changes that might come into existence on a larger scale within society as a whole. This research pays specific attention to contemporary artistic photography and how the body is presented and interpreted within these photographs, to be able to say something about its relation to sexual identity, striving to fill the void in literature concerning sexual identity.

Within this research we will explore the (re)presentation of the body in artistic photography, as the arts can be a reaction to contemporary society. The specific choice for artistic photography is made due to the wide scale use of the art form. Not only are photographs more easily spread amongst people than art works such as paintings or statues, they also tend to represent a reality. By now this reality can be shaped and recorded by anyone with a camera. However, photographers can distinguish themselves from the recording masses through performance (Auslander 1989). Artistic photography has the ability to open discourse on social, emotional, and political level and functions as a sociological and emotional tool (Davenport 1991). Furthermore, the arts and contemporary society are strongly intertwined. Ferrus and Bester even claim that sometimes art can achieve more than politics (Buikema 2009). By studying the photographed body within the art scene of Berlin, this research looks at the reciprocity of the body in photography and sexual identity practices.

The body and the way we think about the body constantly changes and is displayed and interpreted in different ways. The way we think about our bodies is largely influenced by the world around us, our social environment. However, the potential and influence of image in this social environment of bodies on our own bodies is largely overlooked. When considering this potential and influence, we elaborate on boundaries and empowerment, as experienced and expressed, in contemporary artistic photography. This raises questions about the constructive and deconstructive potential of our bodies. The body can then be seen as a symbol as well as an agent according to Reischer&Koo (2004). Not to mention the body as a means for body politics as theorized by Scheper-Hughes (*in* Wolputte 2004, 254) and Lock (1993). This potential of the body in artistic photography is set into relation of the construction of sexual identity within this research.

Sexual identity has long been set alongside sexual orientation and said to be defining an individual's entire identity. Due to this, most research concerning sexual identity is done among LGBTQ individuals and sexual identity development of these individuals. While it is now acknowledged that sexual identity encompasses more than sexual orientation (Degges-White 2000), there is still a large void in the literature on specifically what sexual identity might entail and how it is constructed. With this research, sexual identity is looked at in relation to the body in artistic photography within the art scene of Berlin. Through a study of this relation we aim to contribute to the void in the literature on sexual identity by surpassing the focus on sexual orientation and providing empirical grounds for sexual identity redefined as a broader concept.

The art scene of Berlin as research location was initially chosen due to its international positioning as creative city. The city is exceptionally branded as a creative hub where a lot of artists meet, work and live. It is only evident that artistic photography as part of the art scene would be present here as well. What is furthermore striking about Berlin is its history as a city with a great sexual freedom (Beachy 2015; Eder 2014; Evans 2011). This history has possibly shaped attitudes in the city towards sexual identity and has influenced the creative scene of the city. Berlin thus provided a research location where not only the progressive potential of the art scene is present, but also a location with a progressive history concerning sexuality and sexual identity. Research on the influence of the sexual history of Berlin related to the art scene is relatively new, due to the recent branding of the city as creative city. In short, aside from the void in literature concerning sexual identity, this research also aims to give insight into the influence of the context of a city and its history on the art scene of the city, by looking at the case of Berlin.

This research is generally divided into two. From an anthropological perspective, there has been a focus on contemporary artistic photographers in Berlin and their audience. This division makes it possible to look at both the presentation of the body in photography and the representation, or interpretation, of the body in photography related to the construction of sexual identity. The research population of artistic contemporary photographers in the art scene of Berlin can best be described as consisting of artistic photographers or artistic photography students who have or have had their work up for exhibition in Berlin, or wish to do so in the future. The research population concerning the audience of these photographers can best be described as people that are both professionally and non-professionally connected to photography, but are not photographers themselves. They either work within the art scene or very frequently attend galleries, museums and exhibitions. This division creates the possibility to look at the tension between expression through the body in photography and experience of the body in photography, and how discourses within photography are related to structures of power concerning sexual identity. This resulted in the formulation of the following research question: *How is the (re)presentation of the body within contemporary art photography related to the construction of sexual identity of photographers and audience in the art scene of Berlin?*

During this research around twenty-five formal interviews have been conducted over the course of ten weeks. The interviews with the photographers were strongly structured, while they were more semi-structured during the interviews with the audience. Furthermore, around half of the interviews conducted among the audience, photo-elicitation was used as a method. Photo-elicitation entails that a collection of around thirty photographs were taken to the interviewee and that questions were asked about these images outside of a gallery or museum.

The enormous art scene of Berlin contains over 200 museums and galleries, among which a part of those museums and galleries specialize in photography. However, photography as an art form is not solely bounded to these galleries that specialize in photography, but is widely spread among numerous galleries. Aside from formal interviews, informal conversations and encounters often took place at gallery events that concerned artistic photography. These events entailed vernissages, exhibition openings, finissages, the last evening of an exhibition, and workshops. Participant observation and hanging out have been practiced during these events, as well as outside of these events in more personal surroundings of informants. Informants were mostly met through galleries by means of previously mentioned events, as well as contacts provided by galleries specialized in photography. We deliberately do not use the term gate keepers for these galleries, as their contacts functioned as a starting point. The connection to galleries through acquaintance did not seem to be useful within the wider network of the art scene of Berlin, no further doors were opened. All informants were reached by means of the snowball effect, where new informants are found through older ones.

This thesis will start with a literature study, in which first an outline of theories about the body within anthropology will be given. Secondly, photography will be conceptualized and brought into relation to the body. This chapter will clarify the importance of photography and the arts within our research. Within the third chapter, embodiment and identification are central. In this chapter, there will be specific attention for theories around sexual identity. The last chapter will focus on the discussion of boundaries and power systems, by discussing agency and empowerment concerning the body and its boundaries. The theoretical framework is followed by context, in which the research site of Berlin is discussed. Berlin will be set into historical context and will be acknowledged as a city with a dynamic view on sexuality as well as a creative city within the global arena. The context will be followed up by four empirical chapters. The first chapter discusses how photography is subjectively framed by photographers and how photographs cannot be taken out of several levels of context and their photography is thus always framed in a certain way by its surroundings and their individual selves. The second chapter sets out how the body in photography is looked at. It will be described how photographers perceive beauty when working with the body. Furthermore, there will be elaborated on a contradiction between how society seems to mark the body as a symbol for the natural, while at the same time expecting this symbolic naturality to live up to certain norms that indicate boundaries in society regarding the body. The third chapter goes into how photography may contain emotional content, and how photography can

be an emotional and/or sociological tool, when intended. The second part of the chapter goes into how emotions in artistic photography can create a discourse around a topic, but do not necessarily lead to identification. The final chapter focuses on sexual identity, by first discussing how sexual identity can be defined according to informants. The chapter then continues to look at the influence of sexual identity on the portrayal of the body in photography and lastly discusses agency concerning topics such as sexual identity.

Theoretical Framework

This theoretical framework will set out theories concerning the body in photography and sexual identity. Firstly, theories about the body will be set out. These theories will then be set in relation to theories concerning photography, creating a framework regarding the body in photography. Furthermore, identification practices are discussed, introducing the theories around sexual identity for the first time. Lastly, theories concerning the potential of experiencing an empowerment of photography is discussed.

Anthropology and the body

Author: Suzanne Noordermeer

This paragraph about the body within anthropology will give a clear overview of theories concerning the body that have been prominent within anthropology, emphasizing that bodies are always interacting with the world and can never be decontextualized (DeMello 2014,5; Weiss 1999,1). This cultural significance is expressed through the body's irreducible materiality (Butler *in* Weiss 1999, 76) and results in bodies carrying meaning, representing phenomena and connecting the individual and its surroundings. This paragraph will further elaborate on these statements about the body. Therefore, we will look at the role of the individual and its interaction with the world through the body, by discussing the body mind dualism.

When discussing the body-mind dualism, two writers stand out. Both Schilder and Merleau-Ponty were amongst the first to distinguish themselves by acknowledging the centrality of what they called *the body image* amongst all people, not just physiologically impaired subjects (Weiss 1999,7). To them the concept of body image or the 'self/mind' entailed " […] *an active agency with its own memory, habits and horizons of significance* (Weiss 1999: 3). This however is different from what Butler called the materialized body, or in other words, what Gallagher conceptualized as *the corporeal schema; "a dynamic organization of the body capable of intervention without consciousness"* (Weiss 1999,7). The body image and the corporeal schema are concepts that together form the mind-body dualism. These two concepts have long been treated differently, thereby creating the dualism. However, both are still incorporated into one body and influence each other. This intercorporeal aspect of the body image is emphasized by Schilder and Merleau-Ponty stating that, "*the body image is an expression of an ongoing exchange between bodies and body images"* (Weiss 1999, 3). In other words, the way the body is perceived in the world influences the way the self thinks about its own body. Reversibly, the way the self thinks about its body and alters the body, changes the way the body looks and the way it is perceived. It cannot be denied that the body image is continually influenced by its surroundings through contact with other bodies and body images.

The problem with the concepts of the body and the body image is that their relation to each other is more dynamic than the terminology of the concepts implies. While the term body image does emphasize the part of the self that is connected to the body and its image thereof, it still leaves a few assumptions that can be refined. First of all, an image implies a representation of a phenomenon. Images get their meaning via a rule-based association with an object (Vanini 2016). Using the word image then leaves out the agency of the individual within the creation of the self. Secondly, the word image emphasizes a visual aspect of the body image, while this visual dimension is only a part of body image. The way this visual aspect is perceived is insufficiently taken into account. Finally, the term body image seems to be nothing more than a representation of a mental concept, an externalization of the internal. Hence, the influence of the external is left out. This seems fairly static while in fact body image is a lot more fluid. Therefore, the term *body ekstasis* is used within this research instead of the term body image, following Vanini (2016). In doing so we aim to emphasize the fluidity of the concept. Body ekstasis is then more about an individual and its interaction with the world. This is tightly connected to internal and external identification, concepts that will be discussed in the third chapter.

Body ekstasis as a dynamic concept that is in reciprocal relation to the body and the world, is tightly connected to the way the body is primarily seen within anthropology. Reischer&Koo (2004) claim that the body in anthropology can be seen as both a symbol and as an agent. The body as a symbol was first mentioned in the work of Mary Douglas in which she describes the body as *a text that can be read as a symbol or signifier of the social world it inhabits* (1970, vii). The body then has the potential to express core social value and can be subjected to social power and control by means of aesthetic ideal or beauty and internal discipline (Reischer&Koo 2004, 300-301). Transferring meaning, the body in this context also functions as a medium of social processes and social change and can both be a symbolic field for reproduction and a field for resistance of dominant values and conceptions (Wolputte 2004 255, 308). It must be emphasized that the body as a symbol, like the way this symbolization is perceived of within body ekstasis, is very subject to change. The body as a symbol is all but static and is continually being discussed in the world. This emphasizes the external influence on body ekstasis, in which the body is externally defined by the world.

The second way in which the body is often theorized within anthropology is the body as an agent. The body in this conceptualization functions as the fundamental aspect of the acting self (Reischer&Koo 2004, 307). The acting self is then seen as strongly subjective, where the body is essential in the possibility of expressing these subjectives. However, this indicates that the body is not merely an object, but essential in acting upon the world. This emphasizes again that both the body and body ekstasis cannot be seen separately and are inextricably linked (Weiss 1999). Going beyond the dualism, the body as an agent is not an expression of the internal in the external, but a combination of the external and the internal embodied in the body. The body mediates the relationship between the self and the world and is also all but static. This then emphasizes the internal influence on the body. Together with the theory

about the body as a symbol this shows that the body and body ekstasis are intercorporeal, they are constantly being discussed.

Scheper-Hughes (*in* Wolputte 2004, 254) and Lock (1993) also attempted to surpass the body-mind dualism by theorizing the body from a medical anthropological perspective that focussed on healing. They distinguished three bodies: *the individual body*, the domain of the lived experience of people, *the social body*, the way in which the body operates as a natural symbol representing social relationships, and *the body politic*, where the body functions as a tool or weapon for domestication, disciplinarian, subjection and rejection. Connecting these three bodies as nature, society and the individual are emotions. Scheper-Hughes (*in* Wolputte 2004, 254) and Lock (1993) see emotions as the way to bring all three bodies together. This theory shows that the body is in the world in different ways and cannot be singled out by only looking at the individual. The next chapter will go into reciprocity of the individual and the world through artistic photography and its role in contemporary society.

Photography, art and the body

Author: Maxime Scharrenberg

Having now previously defined the relevance of the body and the way it is looked upon as a dynamic concept that is in reciprocal relation to the individual and the world, the following paragraph will be a clear description of photography and it's role in contemporary society as a form of art. First of all, the fact that photography is a form of subjective framing will be explained. This will be the starting point of the way photography will be considered within this research concerning the body. Lastly the discussion about how images of photography cannot be passively accepted, but can be seen as a sociological or emotional tool, is brought to attention.

Firstly, photography can be seen as subjective framing in a way that a photograph can never be seen by not including the photographer's subjectivity when framing the photograph. It is always a subjective representation of reality. According to Davenport (1991) we tend to assume that a photograph is a depiction of a realistic event and we have been trained in the last century to accept a photograph as a factual object. This is, when considering the photographers subjectivity towards reality and the way he decided to frame the photo, only partially true, for objectivity to full extent will never be accomplished.

The fact that countless photographic images are being displayed cannot be missed. The information these images give, however, is often passively accepted. According to (Davenport 1991) people tend to forget to comprehend photography's important role in shaping phenomena. Photography is partly a sociological and emotional tool; "T*he fact that photographs provide an emotional impetus to*

alter social conditions has long been recognized" (Davenport 1991, xvi). Awareness on social, emotional, and political level can be created, by means of photography. Photographs may contain emotional content in order to say something about a specific phenomenon (Davenport 1991). Photography would also be an emotional tool used to possibly connect these three dimensions of the body, which is referred to by Scheper-Hughes (*in* Wolputte 2004) in the previous chapter, together reflecting on discourses around a specific phenomenon. Ferrus and Bester even go so far as to claim that in some cases art could achieve more than politics (Buikema 2009). This is the reason artistic photography will be looked at within this research. It has the ability to open discourse on social, emotional, and political levels (Davenport 1991). In this case specifically focussing on the (re)presentation of the body in photography related to sexual identity as a phenomenon.

In short, as mentioned in the previous chapter about the body, the body can function as a medium of social change and processes and has the ability to symbolically be a field for resistance and the reproduction of dominant values and conceptions in contemporary society. Artistic photography in its turn is a form of subjective framing and a sociological and emotional tool. This emotional content in photography connects the three dimensions of the body, possibly saying something about a specific phenomenon. The body in photography then has the potential to say something about a phenomenon in contemporary society. Within this research we will be looking at sexual identity as a phenomenon in contemporary society. This will further be elaborated on in the next chapter.

Embodiment and Identity

Author: Suzanne Noordermeer

A connection between the body and individual selfhood cannot be universally given. In most Western cultures, what is communicated through the body is seen as a message from the self (Reischer&Koo 2004). However, Becker notes that in Fiji the body is less a reflection of the self and more a reflection of the community (Reischer&Koo 2004). This case shows that, as discussed in the first paragraph, the body is not an externalization of the internal, but an embodiment of both the internal and the external. Within this paragraph we will explore the connection between identity and embodiment. Identity will be discussed by taking into account social identity and its internal and external dimensions. There will also be specific attention for sexual identity. Finally, a short discussion of the relation between embodiment and the influence of context will be given.

Identification is the specification of what things are or what they are not (Jenkins 2000). Identification of the body takes place both internally (self-identification) and externally. The way we see ourselves and the way we are perceived by others together can be defined as processes of social identification. Social identity is then an ongoing interaction between public image and self-image

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(Jenkins 2000). We know first who we are, because others tell us. The reflexive selfhood may make changes, but first and foremost we are social beings. This means that our identities exist within larger systems of identification and subjectification that individuals cannot control (Zingsheim 2011, 33). Every individual body is embedded in discourse and while there is a certain amount of agency, one cannot achieve full agency over these systems or their place within them.

Mutational Identity Theory states that our identities are shaped by multiple subjectivities (Zingsheim 2011). These subjectivities can be discreet, but they also overlap and blur into each other or even overwhelm and consume another subjectivity. In other words, subjectivities interact and change, they mutate. Identity then is never static but always changing. There are numerous different kinds of subjectivities that can shape an identity but can also be shaped in itself. One of those subjectivities is sexual identity. This subjectivity will be further explained after a definition of embodiment.

When we touch upon the concept of embodiment, definition is needed. Embodiment differentiates itself from bodiliness by visualizing an idea or a concept in an object, in this case the body. Embodiment is then transferred meaning expressed through the use of the body. Embodiment carries meaning in the form of lived experience, it is a part of our being-in-the-world (Wolputte 2004, 258). Csordas (*in* Reischer&Koo 2004) describes embodiment as a mediation of the body through which a self necessarily acts on the world. It is important to keep in mind, that the self is also influenced by the world. Embodiment then is a meaningful expression created through experience. Embodiment however is rarely ever an expression of a full self, of a full identity. This expression is more narrowly connected to subjectivities that are part of an identity.

We take a closer look at subjectivities and their expression by discussing sexual identity. A lot of research concerning sexual identity has been done within the LGBTQ community (Rosario 2006). Being homosexual or bisexual was long seen as being one's sole identity. This is no longer the case. Sexual identity is now seen as being a part of an individual's identity, not defining an individual's identity (Degges-White 2000). Sexual identity can thus be conceptualized as a subjectivity. However, a lot of research about sexual identity has been directed towards sexual orientation, specifically about (homo)sexual identity development. There is quite a big void in the literature concerning sexual identity as a broader concept entailing not only sexual orientation, but also sexual behaviour and attitudes towards sexuality. With this research, we aim to contribute to this broader concept of sexual identity. To be able to do this we will first elaborate on the existing concept of sexual identity by giving a short outline of existing theories about sexual identity development. These theories are developed in close relation to the coming out process of LGBTQ individuals. However, in this research we will not use this focus on homosexual identity development, but set homosexual identity development alongside heterosexual identity development.

Theories about sexual identity development have received considerable attention and have led to the creation of numerous models (Rosario 2006). Following Erikson (*in* Rosario 2012) this process of sexual identity development can be described according to two reciprocal developments. These processes consist of Identity Formation and Identity Integration. Identity Formation encompasses the becoming aware of one's sexual orientation and exploring this orientation (Rosario 2006). Identity Integration involves incorporating and accepting this sexual identity (Rosario 2012). At first hand, the description of these two developments seem to be part of a linear process. However, it has to be emphasized that they are not. They are involved in a reciprocal process (Rosario 2014). This reciprocity becomes more clear when comparing the model of Erikson to the six-stage model of Cass (*in* Degges-White 2000). This model consists of the following stages: Identity Confusion, Identity Comparison, Identity Tolerance, Identity Acceptance, Identity Pride and Identity Synthesis and describes the gradual incorporation of a sexual identity into the identity of an individual as a whole. Cass does not distinguish two separate processes but incorporates them into one gradual process. However, this last model still implies a linear process that is in reality more dynamic.

What the comparison between Erikson and Case also brings to the fore is that both mention the exploring of homosexual identity and seem to take for granted a different lifestyle that comes with a homosexual identity expression. This bodily expression of sexual identity is widely researched (Rosario 2012). However, when it comes to theories about sexual identity, there is very little information about expressions of sexual identity that go beyond this focus of sexual orientation.

Social characteristics are influential when it comes to the interpretation of an image (Eck 2001). However aside from these social characteristics, the way in which embodiment within an image is experienced also depends on the substance and action that are presented (Lock 1933, 142). Substance and action contain both the content of the image of the body and the material context in which the image of the body operates (Buikema 2009, 10). The way in which both substance and action are experienced can influence identities and bring consequences that are not always intended (Jenkins 2000, 22), as we can rarely control how expressions are interpreted (Zingsheim 2011, 34). Interpretation of an image of the body then seems to hold the power over the intention behind the image itself. (Buikema 2009, 12).

To conclude, by looking at the body within photography with a focus on sexual identity, this research focusses on the attitudes towards embodiment of sexual identity in the body in photography. Hereby taking into account that the body in photography can carry different meanings that can be differently experienced. Where social characteristics influence the way a photograph is viewed, the way a photograph is experienced also influences identities. How something is perceived cannot be controlled. The next and last chapter will go into empowerment and agency, outlining how experience and expression have the potential to discuss boundaries of a phenomenon.

Empowerment and the discourse about power and boundaries

Author: Maxime Scharrenberg

To continue with the discourse about identification of the body taking place both internally and externally, Douglas (1996) states that the body can stand for any bounded system. Broadly understood this means that there is reciprocity between the social order and human experiences with their bodies. This statement will be further explained and used to describe the existence of subjective boundaries regarding body ekstasis. These boundaries can be challenged and altered when individuals or groups can or cannot identify with the way the body is represented within a photograph. The possibility of challenging boundaries implies structures of power and empowerment. Empowerment will be defined by Reischer&Koo (2004) and Papa, Auwal & Singhal (1997). The close relationship between empowerment and agency will be clarified. Lastly, when looking at the body, context must not be overlooked, (Weiss 1999).

Firstly, according to Douglas (1966), the body is a model, which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries, which are threatened and precarious. She argues that there is a reciprocity between human experiences with their bodies and the social order. People are known to classify and create order. Classifications are not merely mental operations, but underlie the social order. Taking this into account, these boundaries are subjective boundaries and are influenced by context. *"The body is not only a symbolic field for the reproduction of dominant values and conceptions; it is also a site for resistance to and transformation of those systems meaning", (Crawford: 1984, 95),* (Reischer&Koo 2004, 308). By means of identification these subjective boundaries of the body can be the ground for social change towards the perceptions and construction of sexual identity.

When contemplating the existence of boundaries and the ability to challenge them, empowerment becomes an important concept to discuss. Empowerment can be conceptualized in different ways, however we consider empowerment as having the freedom to do something or say something about a discourse one does not agree with and wishes to challenge. This is where the relationship between empowerment and agency becomes important and can be defined by: "[…] *the freedom to do whatever one needs to in order to achieve goals or values that one views as important. Empowerment refers to the ability to gain power to, power over, power with, or power from within, in spite of opposition from those with whom one interacts. Empowerment is sometimes viewed as synonymous with agency, and at other times a sub-set of agency, a precondition to agency or an extension of agency."* (Fournillier 2012, 1).

Hereby connecting this freedom and agency to the (re)presentation of the body discussed throughout the theoretical framework discussed in reciprocity between the individual and the world, Reischer&Koo (2004) states that *"the body then, by means of agency, has the potential to express core social (or individual) value and can be subjected to social power and control by means of aesthetic ideal and internal discipline"* (Reischer&Koo 2004, 300-301). Or in other words the body is used as a visual expression of values, being embodiment. In this case the possibility of embodiment or visual expression through the body can be considered agency.

When implying that the individual, who is necessarily attached to a body, has agency, and that power is imbedded within its body, enabling empowerment, the fact that *"the body can never be decontextualized"*, (DeMello 2014,5; Weiss 1999,1) from the world around us must not be ignored. This means that we must take into account that every individual body is embedded in discourse, and one can never achieve full agency over these systems or their place within them. There is no full control as to how somebody looks at something due to internal and external identification. However, according to Papa, Auwal, and Singhal (1997) empowerment can be concluded by Albrecht (1988) as: *"This is fundamentally an interactional process, where a sense of personal control results from believing it is one's communication behavior that can produce a desired impact on others"* (Papa, Auwal & Singhal 1997, 221).

To conclude, by means of the (re)presentation of the body within photography, the embodiment of an experience enables people to express values towards possible subjective boundaries. In other words, to empower themselves by saying something about these subjective boundaries. However, the way that something is expressed does not mean it is interpreted that way. Our identities exist within larger systems of identification and subjectification that individuals cannot control. Every individual body is embedded in discourse and while there is a certain amount of agency one cannot achieve full agency over these systems or their place within them. Empowerment is thus the feeling of an individual to be able to influence a phenomenon regardless of the interpretation of it by others. As we have seen before, artistic photography with its emotional content also has the potential to say something about a specific phenomenon. The (re)presentation of the body within photography as a whole, then has the potential to say something about sexual identity as a phenomenon in contemporary society. The city of Berlin provided the contemporary society in which this research took place. The next chapter will elaborate on the history of this city, to explain why this city was chosen as a research site.

Context

Berlin

Author: Suzanne Noordermeer

During the Cold War, Berlin was the embodiment of the division of the world into East and West. There was no city where the bipolar world was more eminent. The divided city itself was located in a divided Germany and a divided Europe. Both East and West Berlin had their own arrangements of economic and social life that came crashing down when the Berlin Wall fell in 1989. The fall of the Wall not only became a metaphor for the dissolving bipolar world, it was also a metaphor for the historical shift beyond the Cold War period (Cochrane&Passmore 2001).

After the end of the Cold War, Berlin was both to be remade as the capital of a reunified German nation-state and introduced in a globalizing world. In short, *"[Berlin was] redefining itself and being redefined within the constraints of twenty-first century. urban development discourse and global political economy"* (Cochrane&Passmore 2001, 343). The expectation was that Berlin would soon catch up with other global cities such as London and New York as a result of a surge in population, an unparalleled economic growth that was in tandem with a building boom (Molnar 2010). This was the expectation of the 'new Berlin' (Cochrane&Passmore 2001; Colomb 2012). However, after a short period in the early 1990's it became clear that Berlin would not become an economic powerhouse of global importance and by the mid 2000's, the marketing of the new Berlin was no longer new and exciting (Colomb 2012).

In addition to this, Berlin provided a unique situation since the fall of the Berlin Wall, marked by a huge amount of open space or 'urban voids'. There are several context specific reasons for the existence of these urban voids. Among them are the former division of the city by the Wall and its surrounding no-man's land, bombing during World War II, destruction of unwanted buildings by political regimes, and deindustrialisation (Colomb 2012). These urban voids in combination with vague situations of planning led to; *"[…]situations functioning as a breeding ground for such (sub) cultural initiatives as alternative movements and experimental and non-commercial creative scenes and, more recently, for all sorts of creative industries"*, (Heebels&Van Aalst 2010, 352). Creative Industries can be defined as "industries that produce products and services with a highly symbolic and aesthetic content. *"[…] Three major domains can be distinguished: media/entertainment, creative commercial services and the arts"* (Heebels&Van Aalst 2010, 347).

Creative industries are acknowledged as an economic sector in its own right, but also as an important factor for the attraction of other industries. It thus comes as no surprise that in the early 2000's

the city of Berlin was increasingly marketed by the Department of the Economy of Berlin as a 'creative city' (Colomb 2012). Creativity here refers to a process by which a symbolic domain in the culture is changed; *"[…] a creative city must consequently also be a new city"* (Jakob 2010, 194). This signifies a shift from the rhetoric about the 'new Berlin' towards a Berlin as 'creative city'.

As of today, Berlin is well known for its creativity, especially as an internationally renowned art city (Jakob 2010). This has resulted in a large community of expats in, contributing to the international status of Berlin as creative cities. Furthermore, over ten percent of all Berlin employees work within the cultural industry and the number of creative firms increased by 33% from 2000 to 2006 (Heebels&Van Aalst 2010; Jacob 2010). According to the office of the Mayor of Berlin in 2006, *"Creativity is Berlin's future"* (Jacob 2010, 195).

Photography in Berlin

Author: Maxime Scharrenberg

As stated above Berlin becme internationally known as a creative city, with a large art scene. According to Deschin (2015) there have been discussions about whether or not photography can be seen as art. Photography is often seen as something mechanical, because the instrument used is a mechanical medium. The visual result of photography as a type of art is not the same as a piece of art that has been created by means of pen, brush, pencil, or another tool. However, this does not mean the interpretation and perspective towards the result has to be different (Deschin 2015). Often forgotten is that behind this instrument, being the camera, is human subjectivity. This human subject is affected by context and interacts with this.

The subjectivity of photography can be linked to a shift within photography that is brought to attention by Auslander (1989) and his definition of photography as a subjective performance. Photography today can be seen as representing *"[…] the commodification and objectification that conceptual performance resisted"*. However, *"[photographs] are no longer documents of ephemeral performances, but often constitute virtual performances in themselves. Douglas Crimp has in fact argued that performance has become the informing epistemology of much contemporary visual art" (in* Auslander *1989, 120).* In short, contemporary artistic photography is no longer a form of documentation, but a subjective performance that can be defined as art. In the 1960s and 1970s performance art wished to contribute as a substitute to the work of art as commodity and embrace the world of mass entertainment (Auslander 1989). However, a specific shift within visual arts from documenting to performing made visual arts a tool for change, resulting in visual arts no longer being commodified.

Davenport (1991) claims that in the last century we have been trained to accept the photograph as a factual object. However, according to Auslander (1989), photography as art is not documentation, but a subjective representation of reality. Building forth on this subjective representation of reality, photography also has the ability to be a medium in a way that can create social awareness, change, and processes. In addition to that, as mentioned before in previous chapters, the body within photography can also be considered as a field for resistance of dominant conceptions and values, and a field for reproduction (Wolputte 2004 255-308). This case of the representation of the body in the context of photography combines these two potentials of usually separately researched concepts and looks at how they work together as a dynamic concept.

To conclude, due the definition of photography being a subjective performance, a subjective (re)presentation of reality, and having the potential to be a medium that can create awareness, change, and processes, photography is inevitably seen as art and cannot be absent in a city like Berlin with such a large art scene. The choice for this setting when it comes to doing research within the field of photography in the art scene of Berlin, is strongly intertwined with the reputation of Berlin as a hub of creativity. Focusing on contemporary photography, it is very important that the research setting is actively reflecting on current society, in order to be able to look at sexual identity as a phenomenon in this current society. While Berlin is internationally known as a creative city, it is also a very new city with a strong political history. It is then only logical that the art scene in Berlin is also evolving around discourses in contemporary society. Furthermore, Berlin's history of sexuality shows that the discussion around the topic of sexual identity is accessible. Berlin as a research site in which both a background in creativity and sexuality is present was a suitable location to study the relation between the (re)presentation of the body in photography and the construction of sexual identity. To further contemplate on this history of sexuality in Berlin, the next paragraph will provide a short overview.

Short history of sexuality in Berlin

Author: Suzanne Noordermeer

When referring to Berlin, the division of the city due to the cold war is one of the first connotations that come to mind. However, Berlin also has an astonishing history of sexuality that became significant for the city in the Golden twenties (Beachy 2015). After the First World War and with American money, Berlin emerged as the most liberal city of the Weimar Republic. Same-sex bars, cafes and clubs were advertised, there were large transvestite balls and for the first time an institute was founded with the purpose to study sexual science. However, in 1929 the Great Depression reached Berlin and shortly thereafter Hitler came to power. The sexual freedom Berlin had experienced was over (Beachy 2015).

After the second world war in post-1945 Berlin, both East and West Berlin challenge distress of danger and desire, pleasure and panic, amidst the challenges of the cold war as part of a reconstruction of the city (Evans 2011:5). It took until the 1960's for the sexual revolution to take place in West Berlin (Eder 2014; Evans 2011). Though 'sex' was still controversial, it again became a part of life that was positively regarded and appeared in literature, magazines, films and educational material (Eder 2014). Currently, in the 21st century, the city of Berlin is still very sexually liberated. Pornography can be collectively viewed in cafes and sex clubs are not uncommon. Berlin not only seems to be in a similar place concerning thriving creativity of the 1920's, also concerning sexuality and nudity the city is again regaining its sexual liberty.

Empirical Chapters

Chapter 1
Framing of photography

Author: Maxime Scharrenberg

Within this first chapter there will be an emphasis on how photographers' subjective framing influences the image that is being created. This will be done by first looking at how artistic photographers work with natural factors, but also artificial surroundings. Followed by how photographers portray reality based on their own subjective reality. This can be grounded in conceptuality, which is used to bring discourses within contemporary society to the fore that are perceived as hidden or considered important. This will be illustrated by three examples of a surreal presentation of reality. When then taking this subjective framing into account, the intention of photographers regarding their photography will be discussed by touching upon the concept of agency and empowerment. The second part of this chapter continues by looking at the audience's interpretation of the photographs, and how different levels of context in which the photographs are looked at can influence this perception.

"Portraying reality is pretty much inexistent I believe[1]", says Luna, a student photographer in Berlin. When looking at contemporary art photography from photographer's perspectives, the concept of reality should be considered essential, due to the different ways it can be depicted. Luna, stating that so many different things shape her reality, can confirm this; *"it's a very individual thing".* According to her, as an individual, your reality is affected by your background, family, gender, and profession; by everything. She continues; *"Everyone's reality is different, and it's constantly changing[2]."* When linking this to Auslander (1989) who claims that art photography cannot be seen as documentation, but as a subjective presentation of reality and thereby a performance that is created by the artistic photographer, who frames and sets his or her own photographs. This performance can be considered by looking at the art form of photography by considering the mechanical approach of photography itself, combined with the aspects of lighting, color, and setting. Resulting in being able to make a distinction between photography that is set up and photography that includes these factors, but are naturally given. In this way, they would be portraying the realistic surroundings and factors around them at that given moment in time and make it a practice that is subject to context.

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[1] Taken from the formal interview with Luna on 28/2/2017 in a coffee shop Berlin

[2] Taken from the formal interview with Luna on 28/2/2017 in a coffee shop in Berlin

Spending another Friday night crawling from gallery to gallery, there was just one more on the list for that night. Entering the relatively small gallery filled with installations of plants flowers, and artificially created breasts, eyes were immediately drawn to photographs on the wall portraits with a huge *papier-mâché 'boob[3]'* on the individual's head. Anna walked around during her exhibition finissage and was continuously approached by the visitors. While waiting for an opportunity to talk, I found myself eating a huge boob sculptured cake to fit in with the crowd. When interviewing this photographer who defined herself as visual artist, she emphasized the fact that she does not aim to portray reality at all and that her pictures are a surreal presentation reflecting on discourses and issues in contemporary society[4]. Her work aims to explore and start a dialogue about the reality of being a woman. So, reality can also be grounded in conceptuality. "*I want to show something from inside. Like not something that people are already seeing. Something that is happening inside and we are looking at it and nobody is seeing[5]*", says Sunny, explaining that as a photographer, he aims to portray certain discourses that seem to be hidden in reality and aren't that obvious, but should to his opinion be brought to the fore. He prefers to show reality in a more dreamy way; "*So you have a little bit easier way to connect, a more beautiful way to connect[6].*" He does this by working with a conceptual reality, with which he wants to impact people with a discourse within contemporary society. On the contrary, Yorick, whose photographs are completely set up and taken in his old factory based studio, where all the factors he uses that influence his photographs are artificial, emphasized on how his images were so surrealistic because they were entirely void of context. Even though the movement and figure in the photograph is a real human being representing reality in itself[7].

The paragraphs above can be concluded in photographers being subjective towards reality and having their own way of framing and presenting what is in the photographs. This means that photography does not necessarily has to present reality on the surface, but has the ability, when intended, to inherently reflect on discourses and issues in contemporary society through, for example, surreal representations. This refutes the statement Davenport (1992) makes that we as human beings tend to assume that a photograph is perceived as a factual object. Photographers do not consider their photographs as factual objects, due to subjective framing. Therefore, portraying objectivity to full extend can arguably never be accomplished. The choice for a certain presentation by means of subjective framing will be further elaborated on in the next paragraphs; by focusing on the intention photographers have with their artistic photography.

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[3] Taken from the formal interview with Anna on 12/4/2017 in her studio in Berlin

[4] Taken from the formal interview with Anna on 12/4/2017 in her studio in Berlin

[5] Taken from the formal interview with Sunny on 28/3/2017 in a park in Berlin

[6] Taken from the formal interview with Sunny on 28/3/2017 in a park in Berlin

[7] Taken from the formal interview with Yorick on 14/4/2017 in his studio in Berlin

Intention

Author: Maxime Scharrenberg

This paragraph will illustrate that photography is a very diverse medium, by mentioning examples of photographer's intentions regarding their work. Considering the subjective framing of photography, photographers have different personal reasons for their work. Photography can be seen as an emotional and/or sociological tool to be able to say something about something they disagree with, to raise awareness, to give a voice to, to intrigue, please other people, and to challenge and express themselves. In this way photographers can be considered to carry agency. In other words, to be able to be free to choose how and what they present in their photography. They can experience empowerment by being able to say something about a specific phenomenon, created through embodiment in a statement. Not being able to control how the photographs are interpreted will be emphasized and thereby also illustrating how understanding is an important concept to look at when it comes to the message photographers want to convey or bring across.

To begin with, Abby, who has done an art residency in Berlin and now works in a gallery and takes on art photography as a personal hobby within her expertise as a visual artist, feels like she and a lot of people around her don't really recognize the things that are happening around them, or maybe just not understanding them. Therefore, she takes photos of people to try to understand them, and tries to show people themselves as well. Secondly, when talking to Sunny about what he intends to do with his photography, the topic of discussion was directed towards his cultural background and how he includes this by involving closeness, limitless, and problems with beauty. He uses exaggeration to criticize social reality, culture, and religion; the way he wants to see new things or things that were prohibited back in Iran. He mentioned that there is censorship there; regarding what specific photographs were allowed and which were not. Sunny wants to show certain phenomena from the inside; *"We are looking at it, but nobody is really seeing it[8]."* In that way photography can create awareness regarding specific discourses in society. Thirdly, according to Dolores mentions photography also has the ability to bring a message across to people. She emphasizes that art photography can be capable of breaking norms about how society thinks it should be. *"It's going to take a long time, but now is the time things are flipping to the other side[9]",* she says when talking about gender inequality. In addition to creating understanding, awareness, and sending across a message, art photography can also be used to challenge specific norms that are set as boundaries. For example, regarding the use of the naked body within photography. According to Abby and Dolores, the nude woman is so normalized,

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[8] Taken from the formal interview with Sunny on 28/3/2017 in a park in Berlin

[9] Taken from the formal interview with Dolores on 14/3/2017 at a photography school Berlin

while woman having a male muse is not considered to be normal. They think it should be because they also have beautiful bodies people should be comfortable about the use of the nude within photography[10]. When talking about norms and boundaries that can be challenged, Davenport (1991, xvi) is drawn upon: "T*he fact that photographs provide an emotional impetus to alter social conditions has long been recognized" Awareness on social, emotional, and political level can be created by means of photography"*. To continue with this notion of photography then considered to be a sociological tool, possibly containing emotional content, Anna mentions that her work empowers her because it gives her the opportunity to be true to herself. She feels there is a revolution going on right now, concerning awareness regarding specific discourses about the body. "*New generations are breaking the gender binary and boundaries that society has put up around sexual identity and all the labels[11]."* She expressed that there is still a need for people to encounter these specific topics, in which she feels like she can create awareness towards it through photography, giving her a feeling of empowerment. Empowerment can here be conceptualized as having the freedom to do something or say something about a discourse in society one does not agree with and wishes to challenge. According to Papa, Auwal & Singhal (1997, 221): *"This is fundamentally an interactional process, where a sense of personal control results from believing it is one's communication behavior that can produce a desired impact on others"*. Art photography hereby has the ability give the subject presented, in Anna's case bodies presented in the photographs, a voice by showing them in a certain way, where the photographer's agency lies with the freedom of choice as to how and what they present in their photographs. This can then embody a specific idea or concept coming from the photographer, carrying agency, in a way that the choice of embodiment lies with the photographer. Where in this case embodiment indicates transferred meaning expressed as a visual presentation within the photograph, which will be further elaborated on through the use of the body within artistic photography in the next chapters.

Lastly, on top of photography being used as a means of expression to bring across a message to say something about certain discourses in society, it can also be a way for photographers to challenge themselves. To illustrate, Luna says that she likes showing her photography because; *"It's simply the first emotional achievement that I have successfully done in art. [...] And that 's a huge feeling. It's a really good feeling to be able to express something very personal and very… that is actually quite heavy for you even though people might not understand it[12]."* This can be done through doing something they haven't done before, in order to see if they are capable of this or to overcome a certain struggle they have with the topic they are presenting. Peter and Anna mentioned the fact that you cannot control the audience's opinion, and therefore you must not be driven by what people might think of your work. Peter says; *"The interpretation lies with the audience"* and *"I think with any message it is usually the*

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[10] Taken from the formal interviews with Abby on 5/4/2017 and Delores on 14/3/2017, in Berlin

[11] Taken from the formal interview with Anna on 12/4/2017 in her studio in Berlin

[12] Taken from the formal interview with Luna on 28/2/2017 in a coffee shop Berlin

one receiving it, who, with any story with any narrative it's the one who hears it, will determine what the message is[13]". The Interpretation of an image then seems to hold the power over the intention behind the image itself, (Buikema 2009, 12). He continued with *"It needs to be interesting and significant to you as a photographer",* after which it is nice if people understand what you were trying to say with your work. However, and that is according to him the beautiful thing about photography; *"everybody thinks they understand photography, or that there is only one photographic language. Well there isn't. There are so many different photographic languages.* Therefore, as an artist you must also understand that not everybody is capable of understanding. According to Jim, who is doing an art photography project where he visits brothels and takes photos of the prostitutes, it is about exposing people to a world and expanding their knowledge about it. He states; *"You want to take a subject, a topic, and you want to research it and you want to give it a voice, you want to create something and then you kind of want it to speak for itself. And you want to make it clear enough for other people to understand it, when they are seeing it.* He continues by saying; "*a photographer can make people understand. If he or she gets it right, and the audience gets what they were trying to depict, even though the topic of the work is difficult to accept or to make visually understandable[14]".* Building forth on this concept of understanding, Peter considers it to be a key element a photographer and anthropologist have in common; *"When we are in any sort of environment, a community, a group, a scene, a city, or a country, we tend to assume that the language or codes are universal, but they are not. They will change when context changes. This also includes the interpretation of photographic language[15]",* Peter mentioned. This then again implies that photography be seen as subjective framing, where the photographer carries the agency, and can experience empowerment to say something about specific phenomena.

Thus, photographers can experience agency and the ability to say something about specific phenomena through empowerment. They have the ability to make a statement or change through, for example, embodiment, further explained within the next chapters. This means that, when considering phenomena in society and photographers intentions regarding their photography, it must be taken into account that everything is embedded in discourse and subject to context, resulting in one never being able achieve full agency over these systems or their place within them, including the interpretation of photographic language. The importance of context will be further discussed in the following paragraph.

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[13] Taken from the formal interview with Peter on 21/2/2017 in his apartment in Berlin

[14] Taken from the formal interview with Jim on 15/3/2017 in a coffee shop in Berlin

[15] Taken from the formal interview with Peter on 21/2/2017 in his apartment in Berlin

Photography in context

Author: Suzanne Noordermeer

When acknowledging that photographs are framed by its photographer and that these photographers are mostly aware of the influence of context and interpretation on how these images are regarded, this paragraph will go further into the influence of this context on how photography is perceived by the audience. Where DeMello (2014,5; Weiss 1999,1) mentions that *"the body can never be decontextualized"* from the world around us, this also seems to be the case regarding photography. The context in which photographs play can be looked at through several levels. The first level that will be discussed contemplates on the influence of the city of Berlin on the perception of topics within photography. Secondly, photography will be discussed considering the direct context in which a photograph is exhibited and how this influences attitudes towards photography. This will be set into relation to how people look at aesthetics within a photograph, lastly discussing how context is created though association of aesthetic when context itself is not present.

When artistic photography cannot be decontextualized, we should consider the wider context in which photographs are embedded. We will thus firstly elaborate on comparative experiences from expats on situations in their home countries to those in their current living situation in Berlin. This comparison is emphasized to highlight how in a city, such as Berlin, its citizens are influenced by conceptions that are regarded as natural within the city. These conceptions stand out when they are different from what people are used to, as was the case with several interviewed expats that moved to Berlin. Our research population consisted of over ten different nationalities of which two experiences will more extensively be used to illustrate this possible influence of the environment of Berlin on the perceptions of artistic photography within the art scene of Berlin.

Inclusivity of the art scene of Berlin was strongly emphasized by Elise, an illustrator from London. According to her, in the UK people tend to be more interested in the degree and status of an artist, while in Berlin more attention is paid to your actual work and what you do[16]. To her as a newly graduate in her field, this felt as a relief compared to London's art scene. This inclusivity of the art scene can also be seen when looking at the accessibility of vernissages and finissages in Berlin. Everyone that can find the event is welcome to join. In comparison to New York, this is not the norm, explains Peter while standing in the brightly illuminated gallery during one of these vernissages[17]. Art events in New York are a lot more exclusive, not everybody is welcome. This inclusivity does not only include the art scene of Berlin, according to Boris. He explained that his interest for feminism started

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[16] Taken from the formal interview with Elise on 30/3/2017 in a coffee place

[17] Taken from an informal conversation with Peter on 31/3/2017 during a gallery vernissage

when he came to Berlin, as *"Berlin in general has statements everywhere, protest everywhere. If you are not reading about welcoming refugees, then you are reading about… Everything is so much more advanced and liberal here. I just learned about or was confronted with most things a lot quicker*[18]*"*. This shows that in Berlin as a city has a strong critical attitude towards a multitude of topics within society and give voice to a lot of different people.

The biggest change Lizzy, an American costume designer, noticed when she arrived in Berlin was the free attitude towards sexuality. She expressed this by saying: *"So I think I am changing my relationship to how I think about the body, because of the openness here with nudity and sexuality*[19]*"*. In other words, she not only took notice of a difference, the difference changed her perspective on something, in this case her relationship to nudity and sexuality. However, it should be noted that there was no primary cause for this experience of difference, several experiences contributed to this change in relationship during Lizzy's stay in Berlin. *"I don't know if it is a culture wide thing, but everybody I met seems to be more open to their bodies and their sexuality than I am used to*[20]*"*. Lizzy thus linked Berlin to an environment in which sexual freedom is the norm. Elise also mentioned how: *"People in Berlin are more free, more liberated [regarding sexuality]. You can see the liberation in club life and it has left its mark on the art scene of Berlin*[21]*"*. Emphasizing the connection between the environment of Berlin and the art scene of the city.

With these two examples of experienced differences in Berlin I aim to show the impact of the environment of the city of Berlin. For comparison puts into perspective. Only in comparison do aspects of an urban environment stand out and show its impact, as they are quickly overlooked when used to these city aspects. Every city is differently experienced as it has a different history and makes different statements. There is a reason why some photographs sell like cookies in one city, while they catch dust in the other. Photographer can experience this difference when exhibiting one series in multiple cities. As for Berlin, what seems to stand out are experiences about inclusivity and sexual freedom, that can influence what is accepted or seen as outstanding regarding photography within the city of Berlin, as mentioned by Elise.

The smell of what the shop employee is baking in the quiet coffee place deep in Neukölln is spreading through the shop. It is cloudy and chilly outside when Ben rushes in without a coat, as it was stolen in the club the night before. He apologizes for being really tired and hungover during our previous conversation, takes a breath and orders a large cup of coffee. After his first sip he acknowledges that he had only had about an hour or two of sleep before he came over to the coffee place and he start to tell

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[18] Taken from the formal interview with Boris on 8/3/2017 in a coffee place

[19] Taken from the formal interview with Lizzy on 22/3/2017 and valuated according to statements on 25/03/2017, both in her work area

[20] Taken from the formal interview with Lizzy on 22/3/2017 in her work area

[21] Taken from the formal interview with Elise on 30/3/2017 in a coffee place

the story of how his coat got stolen and how his new friend of the evening deliberately wanted to walk away without paying for his drinks. When the topic turns to photography, Ben admits that he had contemplated a lot about what his friend Mathilda had said during our last conversation[22]. He still looks a little amazed when he tells about how he had always looked at the functionality of photography to determine if it would be considered art or not. Until now, he had always thought that when a photo was portrayed a context in which it was supposed to sell something, it was an advertisement. When a photograph was hung in a gallery or museum, it is art. However, Mathilda gave the example of Helmut Newton: *"he took photos for all these fashion magazines and you can see all these photos in the gallery"*, which made Ben doubt his statement about functionality. He admitted that possibly advertisement photos then could also be art[23].

Now we have discussed at how photography might be perceived in the wider context of Berlin, we will furthermore be taking a look at the direct context of a photograph. As seen above, Ben sets out how he has always regarded the context of a photo as part of the functionality of photography, showing that exhibiting photographs in a gallery or museum gives the photograph a certain allure that brings about an impression of the artistic compared to photography in advertisement. Like Ben, some people tend to not question these surroundings in their judgement of photographs. However, there are also people like Mathilda that are aware of changing context around photographs. In other words, how a photograph is perceived can be influenced by the context in which a photograph is set, but to what degree is highly subjective.

Another example of influential context concerns Instagram. Instagram is a social media platform that evolves around images that are shared. Looking at Instagram with photography as a starting point, Frank brought up the topic of aesthetics. Still, aesthetics are not the only thing that is important in an image. What the image aims to bring across by means of message is also considered in Frank's evaluation of a photograph. When it comes to Instagram, he mentions the following: *"[...]personally I don't feel only aesthetics or a core of aesthetics is satisfying. It is interesting, like Instagram, but satisfying no[24]"*. Later on in the conversation Frank mentions that he sees Instagram as the portrayal of 'day to day weird stuff[25]'. When talking about Instagram with Lizzy, she mentions that she loves to see what people capture on Instagram[26]. These statements taken together, Instagram as a medium portrays photos that personally seem to interest people through a certain aesthetic, without a needed message. Images on Instagram seem highly personal and function as portrayal of a memory or experience. Instagram is thus often seen as a portrayal of daily life. This seemed to translate to a

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[22] This conversation is a formal interview including photo-elicitation with Ben and Mathilda at the same time on 6/3/2017 in a park

[23] Description based on a meeting with Ben on 6/4/2017 in a coffee place

[24] Taken from the formal interview with Frank on 11/4/2017 in a bar1

[25] Taken from the formal interview with Frank on 11/4/2017 in a bar

[26] Taken from the formal interview with Lizzy on 22/3/2017 in her work area

heightened appreciation of photos on Instagram regarding reality, compared to artistic photography. The self was more than once compared to images and ideal on Instagram[27], while this comparison did not seem to take place with artistic photography. A photograph as present on a social media platform such as Instagram seems to influence the degree of reality perceived in the image, through its association with daily life. How a photograph is experienced is thus also influenced by where it is exhibited.

Lastly, a question that arises, is what happens to artistic photographs when they are taken out of context, outside of museums and galleries. A perfect way to find out about this was by means of photo elicitation. In all cases where photo elicitation was practiced during interviews, one photo in particular was repetitively set apart from the rest. It concerned a black and white photograph of a man coming out of the ocean. The background is slightly blurred, putting the emphasis on the muscled, naked man that is visible from head to just above the pubic area. The Caucasian man takes up about a quarter of the frame of the image and is positioned slightly to the right of the center. The man has dark hair till just above the shoulders and is standing with his left arm alongside his body and his right hand in his hair, slightly tilting his head. The shot was taken in a series with multiple naked men, but apparently didn't seem to fit in. Somehow, the photo seemed to have the aesthetic of an advertisement photo over an artistic photograph according to statements such as: *"It really looked like an advertising picture [...] It didn't really look like art[28]"*. It seems then that photographs are not only interpreted according to context, the image itself also seems to be continuously compared to other images in daily life. Aspects within artistic photography such as pose and lightning are compared to these aspects in other images and the context in which these images are seen. An image itself can thus not be seen as separate from other images and their context as artistic photography also seems to be subjected to certain aesthetics of association, thus creating a context around an image when the context itself is not present.

This chapter has set out how the choice for a certain presentation by means of subjective framing by photographers, can be related to the intention behind a photograph. However, how the audience perceives these photographs can be influenced by different levels of context in which the photographs are looked at. How a photograph is intended and how it is interpreted can differ. The next chapter will go further into this differentiation by taking a closer look how the body in artistic photography is presented and interpreted.

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[27] Based on formal and informal events on 22/3/2017, 28/3/2017, 11/4/2017.

[28] Taken from the formal interview with Ben and Mathilda on 26/3/2017 in a park

Chapter 2
The photographed body

This chapter will explore the way the body is discussed within photography by taking into account the presentation of the body by the photographer and how this is interpreted by the audience. The body is quickly associated with nudity and nakedness, as clothing and body accessories are seen as symbols for *"status and other forms of cultural identity"*. The nude is perceived by both audience and photographers as *"more neutral than a clothed body"*. The first part of this chapter will go further into how beauty is represented through nudity by photographers. The second part of this chapter will further elaborate on how bodies, especially nude bodies, are perceived and judged, regardless of the intention behind the photograph and the claimed idea of purity behind the nude body

The body and beauty

Author: Maxime Scharrenberg

The body presented in photography cannot be seen as merely an object. It is also essential as to carrying subjective expression and communication, by taking into account the photographer's intentions. The photographer can be considered an agent as to how and what he chooses to present of the body in his photography. This will be elaborated by discussing how the body was presented within photographer's photographs and their reasons for specifically emphasizing these. Within the presentation of the body, beauty turned out to be an important concept, which is symbolized by photographers, often through the nude body. Presenting the body as a symbol for beauty, having the potential to carry core social value, is often done by presenting their models in a very natural way. By doing so, it became apparent that in case of portraying the nude is seen as the most natural way implementing the beauty of the body. According to photographers there is a sexual connotation regarding the depiction of the nude body in society, which they try to avoid and resist by normalizing the topic.

To begin, the concept of beauty is seen as important, regarding the presentation of the body in photography and through photography. The reason for this can be illustrated by the example of how Yorick, an artist photographer who is very much set on the mere aesthetics of photography and the body within it. He emphasizes that his photography is born out of the frustration of the ideal: *"the ideal of beauty that we are confronted with everyday"*. He elaborated this by stating that *"200 years ago people saw maybe a painting or something in a church or maybe in a rich man's house or at a library or a*

government building, and then over time we got a few more images in newspapers and so on[29]." He said we very quickly got to the point where we see something like two to three thousand pictures a day. *"We have a mental filter at this point, where we immediately see something and we know that's supposed to make us feel sexier or feel safer or it's supposed to invite us to buy a product. My work references that[30]."* By depicting what he sees as idealistic beauty he aims to create an image that other people find beautiful and aesthetically pleasing[31].

When talking to the photographers about the presentation of the body, not only Yorick touches upon the concept of beauty and its discourses in contemporary society. More photographers seem to be looking for beauty in general. However, Sunny mentions that he thinks it is fine that he wants to take photographs for beauty, but he doesn't want it to be just wallpaper[32]. This is where he mentions that concept within photography becomes important, which according to Jim, if used right, enforces people to think and understand[33]. The concept of the body here then becomes a symbol for beauty, often presented through the nude, elaborated on in the next paragraph. Reischer&Koo (2004) claim that the body in anthropology can be seen as both a symbol and as an agent. The body as a symbol was first mentioned in the work of Mary Douglas, in which she describes the body as a text that can be read as a symbol (1970, vii). The body then has the potential to express core social value (Reischer &Koo 2004, 300-301), in a way that it symbolizes beauty, where the body can act as an agent, as to being subjected to social power and by means of aesthetic ideal of beauty and internal discipline It can then be said that the presentation of the body has the ability to be a social tool.

Therefore, due to a lot photographers' emphasis on beauty, and in order to understand how this is translated into their photography, it must be taken into account that the body as a symbol, like the way this symbolization is perceived of within body ekstasis, is subject to change (Reischer&Koo 2004, 300-301), due to the context it is presented in. For this reason, amongst others, Peter wants to present his subjects as natural as possible; through the nude. By doing this, he tries to give this group of people, which were young gay men in Berlin, a voice in which the broad emphasis is on the: *They are beautiful'. 'You are beautiful and we see you[34]."* By transferring meaning, the nude body, symbolizing beauty in this context, can function as a medium of social processes and social change and can both be a symbolic field for reproduction and a field for resistance of dominant values and conceptions (Wolputte 2004 255, 308).

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[29] Taken from the formal interview with Yorick on 14/4/2017 in his studio in Berlin

[30] Taken from the formal interview with Yorick on 14/4/2017 in his studio in Berlin

[31] Taken from the formal interview with Yorick on 14/4/2017 in his studio in Berlin

[32] Taken from the formal interview with Sunny on 28/3/2017 in a park in Berlin

[33] Taken from the formal interview with Jim on 15/3/2017 in a coffee shop in Berlin

[34] Taken from the formal interview with Peter on 21/2/2017 in his apartment in Berlin

When looking at photography books during one of the exhibition openings one of them really stood out due to its minimalistic approach. It was a white book covered with red text. In it were at least three dozen different faces presented with red letters written on their faces. After contacting this photographer by E-mail, I discovered the artist photographer named Joe specifically emphasizes taking photos of people's faces and letting them write their guilt on it themselves, because for her communication firstly happens through the face[35]. When presenting the body in photography some photographers emphasize a specific part of the body. The reason for emphasizing is usually because of their personal preferences towards communication. *"You don't notice them unless they are wrong. They are incredibly important. The minute the hand is off, if it's all cramped, then the whole image doesn't work, but if the hand is right it has an incredibly powerful effect and you don't notice it[36]."* says Yorick. In contrast to Joe, Yorick, Sunny, and Abby particularly focused on hands in their photographs, because to them hands are expressive in nature. They believe hands communicate more than the face does. Julia mentions that when presenting the body she finds it important to show her subjects, being the body presented in the photographs, in a very direct and honest way. She mentions; *"A naked body is way more neutral than a clothed body. Because clothing is also something that represents personality, culture, and social status[37]."* This is according to her best done stripped down of their clothes, due to clothes being imbedded in context; social status, culture, family, and personal background.

Building forth on the naked body within artistic photography, it is interesting to note that when asking photographers whether they knew any other photographers who present the body in their photographs that could be relevant to talk to, they would be confused as to in what way the body should be presented. When suggesting friends or other artistic photographers whom they knew or had heard of, it was not an exception that most of the photographers they recommended depicted the nude body. When visiting Luna in her house, where I was invited for the third time now, she mentioned that society often has an attachment of the sexual connotation to the nude body in artistic photography[38]. However she believes that the nude can be used as a medium of expression in photography outside of the sexual connotation, and can be explored as a manner to convey a message. *"Society's sexual connotation towards the nude affects the overall perception of the nude in photography and the media. The nude within photography can be used as a medium of expression in a way that photographers see it as a must to portray because it is part of the concept of message he or she wants to convey or sent across"[39].* In addition to Luna, most photographers spoken to intentionally try to avoid or resist the sexual connotation when it comes to use of the nude body within their photographs. Dolores, for example, tries

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[35] Taken from the virtually conducted formal interview with Joe on 11/3/2017 on skype in my room in Berlin

[36] Taken from the formal interview with Yorick on 14/4/2017 in his studio in Berlin

[37] Taken from the formal interview with Julia on 28/2/2017 in a coffee shop in Berlin

[38] Taken from the informal conversation with Luna on 30/3/2017 in her apartment in Berlin

[39] Taken from the informal conversation with Luna on 30/3/2017 in her apartment in Berlin

to normalize the topic of sexual identity. *"I'm trying to normalize this topic. Not saying that it's like a taboo of showing it directly in the face. It's just what it is you know[40]."* She continues to tell me that showing nude bodies does not necessarily have to be pushing boundaries, even though there being a lot of nude photography out there which is meant to eroticize the female or male body. None of my informants intend to eroticize the bodies they present in their photographs. However, as Anna, who takes self-portraits nude, and emphasizes breasts within them, mentions considering this eroticization of the body, as a photographer you cannot control the audience's opinion[41].

Judging the body

Author: Suzanne Noordermeer

It is important to underline that not everyone looks at the body in photography in the same way. Here, there will be an emphasis on judgement of the photographed body by the audience of photography and how this can be an expression of social values. In other words, while people claim to associate the body with a symbol of purity and shared humanity, the nude body is nevertheless not experienced as natural, but often judged, compared or partly avoided in conversation. This contradiction concerning the photographed body will be set out within the following paragraphs.

When looking at the body itself in photography, there is a strong tendency to link the term 'the body' to nudity and nakedness. Clothing and wearable body decorations are quickly marked as symbols for *"status and other forms of cultural identity[42]"*. Nudity is frequently associated with that what *"brings us back to just human being[43]"*, in other words nudity symbolizes the connection of the human being to nature. The nude body is what unites us as humans, as it is something we all have. Unclothing a body or a focus on a body part within a photograph would then suggest that an image is created that is recognizable for every person. This is illustrated by the following statement: *"When you take off your clothes, you lose a bit of your identity. You become more generic[44]"*. People acknowledge that other bodies carry different personalities that communicate with each other, while at the same time all having this same connection to nature through their bodies. Humanity seems to be central when the nude body is central within photography.

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[40] Taken from the structured interview with Dolores on 14/3/2017 at a photography school Berlin

[41] Taken from the formal interview with Anna on 12/4/2017 in her studio in Berlin

[42] Taken from the formal interview with Lizzy on 22/3/2017 in her work area

[43] Taken from the formal interview with Lizzy on 22/3/2017 in her work area

[44] Taken from the formal interview with Frank on 11/4/2017 in a bar

While a shared humanity seems to be central when looking at the nude body, the body is also judged. This judgement became clear when Mathilda showed me a feed by a photographer that she praised for depicting bodies in different sizes[45]. However, she criticized the bodies when they seemed too different. There was one example where a nude woman was sitting on a chair, in front of a plain wall, with her back turned towards the camera. It was visible that the woman was quite heavy, by the looks over the several layers of skin. She commented on the image by saying: *"Look at that. It is very curvy. Looks kinds elephant. Sorry[46]"*. The apology implicates a comparison between the elephant and the woman that is not desired. Another comment was made about an image of a woman that was also positioned with her back turned towards the camera. This woman was squatting down, had her arms raised in the air and was surrounded by a forest-like environment. The woman's rib cage was clearly visible, which caused Mathilda to state that *"It is weird. […] her body looks a lot, looks skeletal[47]"*, furthermore commenting that similar images in which a rib cage would be visible, would make her worry that those women are not eating enough.

What is mainly discussed here are extremes that are viewed as not healthy or not natural. These statements do not show rejection or exclusion of a body and its aesthetic, but merely recognition of difference from what is considered as norm for a body. In this case, the norm concerns a healthy-looking body. These comments were made regardless of the topic within the photograph. A healthy, natural body seemed to be a prerequisite for a body in photography that must be met to be able to touch upon other subjects that can be discussed through the photograph in which this body is displayed. In other words, a body must first meet norms to be able to discuss a different topic. This means that core social values about the body can be provoked by portraying an aesthetic that does not coincide with these social values. Linking this to previously mentioned literature, the body has the potential to provoke core social values and social power in the form of judgement over a bodily aesthetic. The next paragraph will go into how the body not only has the potential to provoke, but also to express core social value and can be subjected to social power and control by means of aesthetic or ideal as mentioned by Reischer&Koo (2004, 300-301).

Where the body is associated with humanity, differences are also acknowledged. However, when a body is too different from what is considered a norm, the body stands out and is judged. While we have previously discussed how bodies are looked at as a whole, we cannot overlook that different parts of the body are valued differently. This becomes evident when looking at a statement made by Frank about a photography series with nude men: *"I have to look at their face to see the identity of them. But afterwards you kind of have to look at their dicks, it is kind of impossible not to[48]"*. This

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[45] Taken from the formal interview with Ben and Mathilda on 26/3/2017 in a park

[46] Taken from the formal interview with Ben and Mathilda on 26/3/2017 in a park

[47] Taken from the formal interview with Ben and Mathilda on 26/3/2017 in a park

[48] Taken from the formal interview with Frank on 11/4/2017 in a bar

implies that the face is strongly personal and what differentiates people from each other, as they carry different identities. Genitalia on the other hand are a more sensitive and uncomfortable topic as one can feel forced to look at it. During several conversations with people, they expressed that they were not uncomfortable in talking about genitalia in photography. Nevertheless, they avoided this topic of discussion as much as possible[49]. Where the face is seen as carrying personality, genitalia are not as widely discussed as claimed. Frank explains this avoidance of topic by stating that people *"tend to distance themselves from nature[50]"*. Genitalia become explicitly visible when a body is depicted nude, as in daily life genitalia are often covered. Genitalia then can be seen as a symbol for the human connection to nature. If people tend to distance themselves from nature, this may explain why people distance themselves from genitalia as well and it may explain feelings of discomfort that people experience when they are brought in contact with visuals of genitalia. Not only the body can then be seen as a symbol (Reischer&Koo 2004), body parts can also be regarded as a symbol. Body parts then are part of the body as a text that can be read as a symbol or signifier of the social world it inhabits that is mentioned by Douglas (1970). Body parts as a symbol then have the potential to express social values, whereas in comparison judgement about aesthetics of the body have the potential to provoke social values.

Looking at the body in photography this chapter has looked at how photographers work with notions of beauty regarding the body and has elaborated on how the audience looks at the body and parts of the body. While this chapter discussed how the body is looked at, the next chapter will go further into personal connections to the body in artistic. The body will be set into relation to the personalities of the photographer creating the image, as well as to how the body in photography is perceived and identified with by its audience.

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[49] Based on observations during conversations on 12/3/2017, 26/3/2017, 30/3/2017

[50] Taken from the formal interview with Frank on 11/4/2017 in a bar

Chapter 3
Emotions and identification in photography

Author: Maxime Scharrenberg

While the previous chapter took a closer look at how the body in photography is presented and represented, this chapter focuses on how photographers and the audience identify with these bodies. The first part of this chapter will go into how the body in photography can be used as both an emotional and a social tool and how identification between photographer and their work is a very conscious choice. The second part of this chapter focuses on why people look at art and how they inevitably have different interpretations of bodies in photography. Identification with photography is very personal and likely takes place on the level of subjectivities.

Having discussed the body and highlighted how photographers touch upon the importance of presenting the body by symbolization of the concept of beauty in the previous chapter, this paragraph will touch upon the dialogue between the photographer and its subjects, the bodies presented. The degree to which photographers identify with their work when presenting the body is very diverse and personal. Some use photography as an emotional tool for self-expression, while others try to avoid identification with their work. When then acknowledging photography as an emotional tool, we must not forget that photographs may contain emotional content in order to say something about contemporary phenomena, thereby becoming a sociological tool mediated through embodiment which indicates transferred meaning expressed through the use of the body as a visual presentation.

When presenting the body within photographs, Jim emphasizes the importance of making the subject, being the body presented, feel comfortable[51]. Dolores finds this comforting to be easier, due to her own personal experience with being a model[52]. In this way she could identify. This is also the reason for nearly all informants willing to be portrayed the way they portrayed their subjects, unless the context does not allow them to do so, of which Peter is an example. It has to do with him identifying as a heterosexual male, presenting young gay men within his photographs. They required having this specific part of sexual identity, because his work was partly an homage to the young gay friends he lost in New York during the 80s[53]. According to Jim this dialogue between photographers and their subjects is all about communication, interaction, compromising, and adapting. It is important that this dynamic process is visible within his work and the images, because; *"I would like to show my subjects as*

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[51] Taken from the formal interview with Jim on 15/3/2017 in a coffee shop in Berlin

[52] Taken from the formal interview with Dolores on 14/3/2017 at a photography school Berlin

[53] Taken from the formal interview with Peter on 21/2/2017 in his apartment in Berlin

people[54]." This makes the process of photographing other people an interaction. The subject of the photographer, being an individual, still has agency in creating the self when being presented in a photograph. This is also the case in redefining body image as body ekstasis, because: "*Using the word image then leaves out the agency of the individual within the creation of the self*" (Vanini 2016). This example of redefinition can be compared to the interactional process of creating a photograph in which the agency of the model is often overlooked. Photographers in photography have the ability to record a body ekstasis. Photographers have the agency to choose how to present the model, resulting from the dynamic process between the photographer and its subject, and thereby, when intended, embodying a visual experience to say something about specific phenomena.

The level of identification amongst photographers when presenting the body within contemporary art photography is diverse. Sunny mentions that he can identify with the bodies portrayed in his work in a way that it shows himself and how he feels; "*I mean in my personal works it's me. It's completely visible that it's a reflection of me[55].*" Keeping in mind that, the self is considered as strongly subjective, and the body is essential in the possibility of carrying subjective expression in the form of embodiment, where according to (Wolputte 2004, 258) and Csordas (*in* Reischer&Koo 2004) embodiment is referred to as transferred meaning expressed through the use of the body as a visual presentation. An example of embodiment can be given through Anna's work, in which she took self-portraits; meaning she presents her own body in her photographs. She uses her body in photography to express emotions she feels from the inside and process them; "*That was a very dark place in my life, where I was very depressed, very self-loathing. Disgusted by my own body, disgusted by the way I looked whenever I looked in the mirror. And I tried to deal with that, and I tried to express how suffocating that felt[56]*", says Anna. To link the expression of emotions by means of presenting the body in photography, the use of the body as self- expression and emotional tool is drawn on. When intended it then again the possibility to say something about certain phenomena in society, becoming a social tool.

Nevertheless, not every photographer necessarily has the urge to identify with the bodies they are presenting in their photographs. This is a conscious choice. Luna emphasized that it is good to take yourself out of the picture, for not always do you relate to yourself when you are photographing people. "*I think just that the way I see myself and the way I feel myself, and I understand myself is constantly changing, and I try not to put my personal feeling of myself in…especially if it's a negative feeling, I try not to put it in the work. Because I know it's soon going to change anyway[57].*" Luna says she tries not to put a personal feeling of herself, because she is aware of herself constantly changing, as

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54 Taken from the formal interview with Jim on 15/3/2017 in a coffee shop in Berlin

55 Taken from the formal interview with Sunny on 28/3/2017 in a park in Berlin

56 Taken from the formal interview with Anna on 12/4/2017 in her studio in Berlin

57 Taken from the formal interview with Luna on 28/2/2017 in a coffee shop Berlin

Zingsheim (2011) also emphasizes when referring to identity as never being static, but always changing. However, Luna does highlight that this does not mean separating yourself from your work is not something complicated.

Photography can thus be seen as a medium where the next chapter will elaborate on how the body in photography can contain emotional content where it has been mentioned above that it can be an emotional tool by expressing certain emotional feelings of the photographer. However it also has the ability, as shown in the first chapter regarding the intention of the photographer, to be a sociological tool, where the photographer has the agency to say something about a specific phenomenon through embodiment, possibly experiencing empowerment. The next part of this chapter will go into how the body in artistic photography is differently perceived and how this is highly personal.

Interpretation of the body in photography

Author: Suzanne Noordermeer

Within this part of the third chapter we will take a closer look at how the body in photography is experienced. This means that there will be specific attention for how bodies in photography are externally identified by the audience and how they relate this identification to the self. To be able to elaborate on identification practices regarding the body in photography, there will first be attention for why people look at artistic photography in the first place. When Mathilda was asked about what it is that makes her spend her leisure time looking at art and photography, she answered by saying: *"I think when you look at something, and it has an effect on you, in something can make you angry or sad or happy or anything. But everything leads to some kind of emotion[58]"*. According to Mathilda, emotions in artistic photography are what makes an artwork interesting. This emotional content of artistic photography refers to a personal internal movement or interest that is experienced. What is very important here is that this emotional content is personal and not imposed by others: *"It is actually not about what the artist thinks about it, it is about what kind of emotions it awakens in yourself[59]"*. This statement shows that the artist is put out of play when photography is valuated. The emotional valuation of a photograph seems to take place within what is described by Scheper-Hughes (*in* Wolputte 2004) as the individual body and is thus highly personal.

When looking at how reality is perceived within artistic photography, we touch upon another reason for people to spend time looking at artworks. One important aspect of looking at art that needs to be mentioned is that it is a leisure activity for the large majority of these people. This means that

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[58] Taken from the formal interview with Ben and Mathilda on 26/3/2017 in a park

[59] Taken from the formal interview with Ben and Mathilda on 26/3/2017 in a park

people such as Mathilda and Ben visit gallery openings on Friday evenings after work[60], and Lizzy goes to a gallery workshop on the weekends[61]. Looking at art and photography is something that is done to distract from normal daily activity. This is illustrated by Lizzy: *"I mean, I think that is why we have art, or that is why I have art in my life. It is that real-life is very hard and so complicated and so emotional. […] And all these things that come into our lives and create stress and tension. Art is this like relief for it. Where it is like we can go into this whole other realm or world and we can take these things that are hard and make them amusing[62]"*. Lizzy shows here that the way she experiences art and artistic photography is as an escape of reality, while at the same time reflecting on this reality. Mathilda expresses the same feeling when she is asked why it is she likes to go and see art: *"I like the feeling I get when I stand in front of a painting or photograph and just forget everything around me and just think what's going on in what I see. Just try to lose myself a little bit[63]"*. Looking at these statements, artistic photography is not experienced as depiction of reality, but rather as a surreal depiction of reality reflecting on reality. Looking at how reality is discussed within the first chapter as highly subjective regarding the degree of reality presented, this subjectivity seems to be interpreted as surreality.

Both emotional content in artistic photography and the possibility to escape reality through artistic photography can be seen as reasons for people to be interested in artistic photography. We will now go further into how this interest is experienced as related to the self. Firstly, it has to be mentioned that self-identification doesn't always takes place. What is often the case, is that the audience does not identify with the body in a photograph, as a photograph is often not seen as portraying reality, but experiences a sense of empathy. We have touched upon this sense of empathy is the previous chapter about the body, in which looking at genitalia was described as giving an uncomfortable feeling. Ben confirms this when he said: *"when I saw pictures of naked people, it would sometimes make me feel a little bit uncomfortable. Because I was thinking, I would feel uncomfortable if I would be standing naked and having pictures taken[64]"*. Empathy would, according to this statement, be the idea of putting oneself in the position of the model in the photographed image, projecting supposed feelings on this model. We can also refer to the previous chapter about the body in this case, as in this chapter the idea of the body as a symbol for a shared humanity was discussed. When looking at the concept of empathy, the humanitarian aspect of the body is strongly emphasized. Mathilda explained his relation to bodies in photography through the following story: *"It is like when you meet a person and they tell you a personal story, I am trying to feel you. I am trying to think 'oh, would I have acted the same or would I have acted differently?' And I can just listen to it, take the story as it is. […] But if it is not the same feeling*

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[60] Based on observations on 17/3/2017 in the gallery district of Berlin

[61] Based on observations on 18/2/2017, 19/2/2017 at a gallery workshop

[62] Taken from the formal interview with Lizzy on 22/3/2017 in her work area

[63] Taken from the formal interview with Ben and Mathilda on 26/3/2017 in a park

[64] Taken from the formal interview with Ben and Mathilda on 26/3/2017 in a park

[that I have], it was still nice to listen[65]". She emphasizes that a photograph, as any artwork, can tell a story that can emotionally move people. However, people cannot identify with every story, but they can pay attention to it and listen. Empathy regarding artistic photography would then be the acknowledgement of a shared humanity and the ability to sympathize with a portrayed body in artistic photography.

Having now discussed how a sense of empathy can be provoked by the body in photography, identification practices will be looked at. Self-identification might not be as common as a sense of empathy, since *"You don't always see yourself in what you see[66]"*. In some ways identification does take place. However, this might be on a different level than can be expected. According to Zingsheim (2011), identity is created through a collection of subjectivities that are interconnected. As with identity, photographs also consist of several aspects such as lighting, background, model, pose and action that all interact with each other. While there are tricks within photography to create a distance between audience and photograph, such as portraying a picture in black and white or creating a distance between the model in the photo and its background, it is very personal how these tricks and aspects are perceived. When self-identification does take place, this seems to happen more often be with a certain style or aspect within a photograph. In other words, it is often a subjectivity that is recognized. An example is given through a statement by Lizzy. Lizzy is a costume designer that describes her style as camp, *"intentionally exaggerated and intentionally grotesque or crude[67]"*. In other words, blowing something out of proportion and making a topic approachable through humor. When describing one specific photographer she identifies with, she expressed the following: *"so I felt like, you are kind of my boob sister, not afraid to make it cartoony and silly, but at the same time saying: what is the big deal, it is just a boob?[68]"* Aside from the interest in similar (feminist) topics, Lizzy recognized herself in the humorous 'campy' style in which the body was presented, not the body itself. Aside from the similarities, Lizzy also acknowledged differences between her and the photographer. She describes the photographer as polite, graceful and classy and herself more as a messy artist that is more rough around the edges[69]. In short, recognition and identification tend to take place on the level of subjectivities related to certain aspects of style or technique within the image.

Within the previous three chapters We have looked at how photographs are subjectively framed and framed through context, we have discussed how the body in photography is presented and perceived as represented and this chapter has discussed identity practices around the body in photography. The next chapter will take a closer look at the subjectivity sexual identity by discussing how the body in

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[65] Taken from the formal interview with Ben and Mathilda on 26/3/2017 in a park

[66] Taken from the formal interview with Ben and Mathilda on 26/3/2017 in a park

[67] Taken from the formal interview with Lizzy on 22/3/2017 in her work area

[68] Taken from the formal interview with Lizzy on 22/3/2017 in her work area

[69] Taken from the formal interview with Lizzy on 22/3/2017 in her work area

photography can be experienced as empowering and by looking at the role of agency within discourses concerning sexual identity.

Chapter 4
Sexual identity

Author: Maxime Scharrenberg

Within this final chapter a closer look will be taken at how one specific subjectivity, sexual identity, is connected to the (re)presentation of the body in photography. Sexual identity must be looked at as part of an individual's identity, a construction that happens from within the individual. Firstly, this chapter aims to create an understanding as to how artistic photographers in Berlin define sexual identity as part of their overall identity. The construction of sexual identity is seen as not merely a binary look on the development of sexual identity, but it is a combination of different things for each person. Understanding this, some examples will be highlighted regarding the way photographers feel their own sexual identity is of influence in their photography, but also the way in which their photography has the ability to say something about the phenomenon of sexual identity in contemporary society. Secondly, this chapter will elaborate on how looking at certain phenomena within the arts can be a self-confirming choice. The audience of photography does not only see a subjectively framed photograph, it also frames what it wants to see in this photograph.

When asking Luna what sexual identity means for her, while having just emphasized the strength of femininity in her photography, she said sexual identity is a feeling that comes from the inside. Sunny strengthens this opinion and its subjectivity by mentioning that it is completely different for each person. He says; "*you cannot group it, because it is a combination of things that people enjoy; the combination is like a fingerprint[70].*" This corresponds to what (Degges-White 2000) refers to as sexual identity now being seen as part of an individual's identity, not defining an individual's identity. It is a construction that exists and forms from within an individual. Sexual identity can thus be conceptualized as subjectivity. Also confirmed by Abby, where she states that: "*sexual identity is more than saying that you're straight, bisexual, or gay; it is also knowing what is normal for you[71]*". Sexual activity is also considered part of a sexual identity and she thinks it's normal for people to be completely different. A lot of research concerning sexual identity has been done within the LGBTQ community

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[70] Taken from the formal interview with Sunny on 28/3/2017 in a park in Berlin

[71] Taken from the formal interview with Abby on 5/4/2017 in her studio/apartment in Berlin

(Rosario 2006). Being homosexual or bisexual was long seen as being one's sole identity. This is thus no longer the case, in practice.

There are many different ways of looking at sexual identity and when doing so, it is important to consider the context of Berlin, as this where the photographers spoken to operate and where his or her identity is subject. To illustrate the way sexual identity discussed in Berlin, Jim says: *"It's something that is really there[72]"*. According to him sexual identity has really been a hot topic the last couple of years, especially here in Berlin. *"Everything is so free. Sexual identity is how you perceive yourself. What are the things that you find attractive, what attracts you? This is a very raw form of it. It's how you feel most comfortable with yourself. "And I think that here, what's beautiful in Berlin, is people don't find any embarrassment in showing this[73]"*. Peter perceives sexual identity from his experience with a close transgender relative. He learned that first; your biological sex is defined when you are born. Then according to how you feel, your gender identity is determined. Lastly gender expression is considered. This means that what of what you feel, do you express and can you express. Whether this is based on cultural circumstances, the religious community you are in, what your profession allows, and so on[74]. This refers to how the body is in reciprocity with the world and can therefore never be decontextualized (Demello 2014), by which according to Peter's definition of sexual identity above, individual's identities, of which sexual identity is part, are to be influenced.

An example of how the presentation of the body within photography came to existence in a photographer's series, including the subjectivity sexual identity, will be given in order to understand how emotional content can be used within photography. Peter's photographs became a sociological tool as to it reflecting on the discourse on sexual identity within contemporary society. As he was travelling through Berlin, Peter would see young men, to be precise, young gay men, who he felt he knew, while he acknowledges that clearly he knew he did not know them, however he identifies these young gay men with the young gay men he met in New York in the 80's, to whom his work is an homage. He mentioned that he realized that he was seeing these young men being the new generation of people who have come to a town to be themselves, free from judgment experienced elsewhere. By including this emotional content in his work, presenting the body in his photographs Peter gave his subjects, being young homosexual men from Berlin, a voice, to translate their existence, towards the bigger group, thereby becoming a sociological tool. Peter explains that there have been an increasing number of assaults on homosexual, transgender and queer people. As an artist he feels responsible to take a strong position in saying: *"we see you, we find you beautiful, we love you and we stand by you[75]"*. The body

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[72] Taken from the formal interview with Jim on 15/3/2017 in a coffee shop in Berlin

[73] Taken from the formal interview with Jim on 15/3/2017 in a coffee shop in Berlin

[74] Taken from the formal interview with Peter on 21/2/2017 in his apartment in Berlin

[75] Taken from the formal interview with Peter on 21/2/2017 in his apartment in Berlin

within his photography can then be seen as to visualize an idea or a concept in an object; transferred meaning expressed through the use of the body, also previously referred to as embodiment.

To continue, a few examples of how photographer's photographs reflect on the concept of sexual identity and whether their own sexual identity influenced their photographs will be given. By doing so it can be confirmed that this relation is a very personal decision of the photographer. Firstly, Anna her photography deals with exploring female identity, and how it is constructed. How gender roles are constructed. It portrays how she feels about being a woman put in gender roles, or how women's bodies are portrayed in media, commercials, and music videos. Sometimes she wants to counter that; sometimes she wants to explore it. She deals with those themes of objectifying women and their bodies and how their bodies are treated as a commodity or a thing, rather than a person. Anna specifically touches upon the subject of female sexuality, and how women are judged or what is expected of them within their sexuality. She feels like men are celebrated for their sexuality and women are celebrated for their sexual attractiveness, but they are still shaped for their actual sexuality[76]. Secondly, Maria mentioned that she definitely thinks sexual identity is translated into her photography in a way that in general she is interested in this sort of sexual tension that plays out in day-to-day life. She thinks it's very important and it affects her a lot as a human being. Even though she wouldn't wish it would affect her as much. She is very sensitive and mentions that she also tries to portray this in her images[77]. Thirdly, as mentioned before, Dolores explains that she tries to normalize the topic of sexual identity. She is not saying that it is a taboo of showing one's sexual identity or the one of the models directly to the face, however she just perceives it as being what it is. Her photographs tend to aim towards gender equality and make everything seem natural. So it seems that portraying the nude does not necessarily have to be pushing boundaries, but merely has a purpose of showing the aesthetics of bodies with the possibility of eroticizing them[78]. However in a lot of the photographers' work it is not about this, for again the nude should not necessarily be connoted with erotica. On the other hand and lastly, Joe explicitly said that her or her subjects sexual identity had no influence on her photos whatsoever, because this simply was not the topic and she had not thought about it. She states that sexuality is very much normalize in her work and that you cannot distinguish very feminine or masculine aspects. It was her intention not to show it. If sexual identity should be a topic itself, then she would've really focused on showing it[79].

Depending on the way the body of the model is presented in photography, Peter and Dolores mentioned that there tend to be assumptions by the audience about their own sexual identity as photographers. For example, Peter elaborated that people tend to assume that he is a male homosexual

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[76] Taken from the formal interview with Anna on 12/4/2017 in her studio in Berlin

[77] Taken from the formal interview with Abby on 5/4/2017 in her studio/apartment in Berlin

[78] Taken from the formal interview with Dolores on 14/3/2017 at a photography school Berlin

[79] Taken from the virtual formal interview with Joe on 11/3/2017 on skype in my room in Berlin

photographer, due to his explicit presentation of the naked homosexual male[80]. Dolores on the other hand, is also thought to be a homosexual male. She portrays naked men who are not necessarily homosexual. *"Many people thought it was a gay guy doing the pictures. And when they went to see titles and descriptions, they were surprised that it was a woman[81]",* Dolores said. These biased assumptions these photographers experience turned out not to be true. To the photographers this has an unexplainable reason, but yet again confirm that they cannot influence how the audience interprets their work or his or her assumptions about their sexual identities.

Agency

Author: Suzanne Noordermeer

A man and woman enter the long, brightly illuminated gallery space. Almost immediately the man with grey hair and glasses starts to enthusiastically talk to Laura, the gallerist, who is located next to the entry. The woman with a brown long bob and glasses does not enter the conversation but calmly walks towards the photography series. The man and Laura talk a little bit about the neighborhood surrounding the gallery, as this is where the man lives, before they reach the topic of the current exhibitions. When Laura mentions the title of the photography series portrayed in the back of the gallery, the man shows an almost immediate vocal lack of interest. He is quite sure he has already seen the series before, and why would he want to see half naked men posing? As a man with a heterosexual way of thinking, there are things he would rather look at. If the series would have been about naked girls the case would surely have been different[82].

While in the previous chapter there has been a focus on how photographers and the audience relate to the body in photography, this focus is not always similar. As set out in this example of the heterosexual man, sometimes a person is not moved by or interested in looking at in certain artistic photography series. This final part of the last empirical chapter will pay attention to agency of the audience. This agency is influenced by both power structures and personal experiences that eventually lead to a decision concerning participation within a discourse. This choice can entail engagement with a certain artistic photography series or avoidance of a series and its discourse. This chapter will pay specific attention to the discourse around the subjectivity of sexual identity.

Emotional valuation of artistic photography on an individual level, the individual body, has been previously discussed in chapter three. This individual body, as theorized by Scheper-Hughes (*in*

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[80] Taken from the formal interview with Peter on 21/2/2017 in his apartment in Berlin

[81] Taken from the formal interview with Dolores on 14/3/2017 at a photography school Berlin

[82] Description based on observations on 10/2/2017 in a gallery

Wolputte 2004) can be connected to the social body through expression of internal emotions. This is illustrated by setting out how Ben describes what he likes most about spending some of his spare time at galleries looking at art works. He mentions that it is most interesting for him to visit an exhibition with friends as: *"sometimes when you look and see something, and then other people will tell something about what they saw, you didn't see[83]"*. What Ben describes is how every individual potentially experiences an image differently. Artistic photography provides the opportunity to talk about these differences and to start a discourse, as photographs are not perceived as factual objects. In other words, emotional content can connect the individual body to the social body by means of expression. When looking at the theory by Scheper-Hughes (*in* Wolputte 2004), the third body remains, the body politic. This is when we start to discuss the topic of agency.

Elise is looking at a photograph of two naked men when she exclaims that: *"We need to see more of that![84]"* The men in the photograph are placed in a room with dark red floral wall paper. They are positioned in the middle of the picture. The man on the left is laying on his left side, leaning upwards and looking into the camera. The man on the right has his head positioned on the stomach of the other man and looks, slightly frowning, to the left. Genitalia from the man on the left are covered by a hand, the genitalia of the man on the right are blocked from view by his legs. The room in which the men are portrayed is quite dark, but a ray of light illuminates the faces of the men partially. When Elise is asked what it exactly is that she wants to see more of, she replies by saying: "boy on boy action", immediately confirming to seeing a sexual connection between the two men. Aside from this almost instant sexual connotation, these statements also indicate a certain visible impact of photography. Here a link can be seen with naturalization as mentioned by photographers. Elise seems to touch upon the use of the body in photography as a tool for creating a certain norm within society through visibility, in this case the acceptance of 'boy on boy action'. This coincides with the third body as mentioned by Scheper-Hughes (*in* Wolputte 2004), the body politic. Looking at the experience of Elise, visibility of certain topics is emotionally valued as being able to change norms within society. In other words, the visibility of certain bodies in photography can be regarded as a tool or weapon for domestication, disciplinarian, subjection and rejection.

Summarizing the theory of Scheper-Hughes (*in* Wolputte 2004) in relation to the body in photography, the body in photography has the potential to awaken emotions individually and to start a social dialogue through these individuals, connecting the individual body and the social body. Frequent visibility of the body in photography has the potential to increase the number of these dialogues, when considered emotionally important, using the body in photography as a tool to draw attention to certain topics, providing a connection between the social body and the body politic.

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[83] Taken from the formal interview with Ben and Mathilda on 26/3/2017 in a park

[84] Taken from the formal interview with Elise on 30/3/2017 in a coffee place

It must be emphasized that when looking at the connection between these bodies, the is an emphasis on the word dialogue, as interpretations of photographs can differ from person to person. As mentioned earlier by Ben[85], individuals are also aware of these different interpretations. A very strong example of this different interpretation becomes visible when we pay attention to erotization of the nude body. *"people who come to see [nude] photos at the exhibition, they are not all the same. They come to see it because they are looking at art and they see a picture as art. But there are also people that are like horny, when seeing a naked person[86]"*. What this statement shows, is that interpretation is not always similar among people that look at a photograph. Some interpretations may be similar to the intention behind a photograph, while others are not in the slightest way alike. It cannot be controlled how other people think about an image and that expressions of this interpretation can also not be controlled. This coincides with how Buikema (2009) states that interpretation of an image holds power over intention behind an image.

Interpretation cannot be controlled and seems to take place while an artwork is being regarded, as well as before the artwork is even seen. This is set out by Laura and Boris, employees of two different art galleries in Berlin. Both explain that while every gallery attracts a certain group of people due to its location and own connections, every exhibiting artist also brings about their own people[87]. Every exhibition brings about a different group of people with a different atmosphere. Laura elaborated on this by saying that this change that can be noticed when looking at the subscriptions to the newsletter of the gallery. New people subscribe to the newsletter with every exhibition and people that were only interested in the previously exhibiting artist unsubscribe again. The changing aspects within the group of visitors for every exhibition such as age, status, gender and style, indicate that similar people seem to consciously choose what exhibition they are going to and what they deem interesting. In other words, people decide if they want to see an artwork based on information other that the artwork itself. It is stated in literature that photography can be seen as subjective framing in a way that a photograph can never be regarded without taking into account the photographer's subjectivity in framing the photograph (Davenport 1991). However, when people chose to look at certain works of art, a photograph is not only subjectively framed by the photographer, a viewer also subjectively frames what works of art it wants to see.

In the first chapter, we discussed how context influences how artistic photography is perceived. This chapter has taken a closer look at emotional content and the potential of photography to create a discourse around a topic. These aspects together influence an individual in its choice to view an artwork and possibly participate in a discourse. Agency of the individual is then influenced by contextual

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[85] Taken from the formal interview with Ben and Mathilda on 26/3/2017 in a park

[86] Taken from the formal interview with Ben and Mathilda on 26/3/2017 in a park

[87] Based on formal interviews with Boris on 8/3/2017 in a coffee place and Laura on 23/2/2017 in the gallery she works at

framing of artistic photography, existing discourses in this contextual society around a topic within the photographic series and emotional connection to this topic. In the end, the individual uses agency to engage or avoid certain artistic photography based on the factors mentioned above. The question that then rises is if it is even possible that art and photography question boundaries, as mentioned as experienced by photographers in the first part of this chapter, when topics in artistic photography can be ignored or heard, based on interpretation and individual choice by the audience.

We will now take a closer look at how this personal agency is possibly perceived within the discourse in Berlin around sexual identity. The previous paragraph already touched upon how sexual identity can be defined and what is experienced as part of sexual identity. In short, this entails that sexual identity is something you feel. This concerns how you feel about your gender and ascribed sex as well as what you feel comfortable with sexually. Furthermore, sexual identity is also something that is exercised. This is described before as concerning gender expression and sexual activity. When discussing the topic of sexual identity among the audience, this seems to be confirmed. Lizzy elaborates on how some of her friends are very open about their sexuality and their activities, while others keep more to themselves[88]. Lizzy sees an attitude regarding sexuality, as part of their sexual identity. Some people are simply more open towards expressing their sexual identity. Sexual identity can then be described as something you feel, do and express regarding sexuality, creating a personal combination of factors that become part of a person's identity. The shaping of this process of creating this personal combination is especially relevant for young teens that still have to find out how they want to express themselves and what they are comfortable with, according to Elise[89]. She says that photography can be relevant here, as it has the potential to visualize different sexual identities, as ascribed to the photographer or model.

When looking at sexual identity, interpretation seems to influence agency regarding involvement with a topic based on understanding. When it is not understood what is portrayed or how this is portrayed in a photograph, it seems to lose its impact. An example can be given with the example of an artistic photographer that through her photography aims to draw attention to female power, making use of boobs, pink and flowers in her photography. When Frank was asked his opinion on these images, he expressed a feeling of misunderstanding, as how could female power be portrayed by female stereotypes[90]. Ben simply remarked that the images seemed flat to him, he didn't see what they were about[91]. This opposed the view Lizzy has regarding these photographs, which she recognized as 'softly aggressive' and effective towards the topic of femininity[92]. Both Frank and Ben were unable to discuss

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[88] Taken from the formal interview with Lizzy on 22/3/2017 in her work area

[89] Taken from the formal interview with Elise on 30/3/2017 in a coffee place

[90] Taken from the formal interview with Frank on 11/4/2017 in a bar

[91] Taken from the formal interview with Ben on 6/4/2017 in a coffee place

[92] Taken from the formal interview with Lizzy on 22/3/2017 in her work area

the topics within the photographs, as they did not understand the images. Lizzy on the other hand was actively explaining her views on the topics she saw within the photography, engaging with the image.

Sexual identity is highly personal and as part of a person's identity seems to influence identification, also influencing how photography is perceived. In the first chapter, we have discussed how the sexual freedom experienced in Berlin 'left its mark[93]' on the art scene of Berlin and how the discourse around sexual identity is experienced as a 'hot topic[94]'. This influence of a city on the art scene can be deemed structural influence. In short, the decision, or agency, of an individual to look at artistic photography concerning sexual identity seems to be influenced by structural factors concerning context, and personal factors concerning experiences that contributed to a person's identity. The function of photography would then be to provide the opportunity to engage with the topic of sexual identity.

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[93] Taken from the formal interview with Elise on 30/3/2017 in a coffee place

[94] Taken from the formal interview with Jim on 15/3/2017 in a coffee shop in Berlin

Conclusion

The previous empirical chapters have generally discussed four topics; framing, the body, identification, and sexual identity. Within this chapter we will connect these topics to answer the question posed in the introduction: "How is the (re)presentation of the body within contemporary art photography related to the construction of sexual identity of photographers and audience in the art scene of Berlin?" We will do this by first setting out how the presentation of the body relates to how is experienced what the body represents. There will be three topics that will be elaborated on; framing identification, and the indication of boundaries. Secondly, we will set out how photography is experienced as empowerment by challenging these boundary structures by photographers and how interpretation by the audience is influenced by structural norms and a combination of agency. Lastly, we will conclude how notions of sexual identity are regarded within the art scene of berlin and how these notions can both be contested and confirmed by means of the body (re)presented in photography.

The way in which the body is presented within artistic photography is subjectively framed by photographers as coinciding with Ausländer (1989). This becomes clear when looking at the different ways in which reality is portrayed within photographs. Photographers make a very conscious choice about how realistic they portray a body or how realistic the environment is in which the body is positioned. This choice, as made by the photographer, causes artistic photography to arguably never be an objective presentation of reality, contradicting Davenport (1992) who states that human beings tend to accept a photograph as factual object. However, it should also be noted that the body presented in artistic photography can also be seen as agent in the process of creation of a photograph. Photographers then have the agency to choose how to present the model, but are often influenced by the the dynamic interaction between the photographer and its subject. When we compare this subjective framing of reality to how the audience of artistic photography perceives this reality, we have noticed that photography is rarely seen as a depiction of reality. However, aspects of a photograph can be recognized as realistic, as referring to reality. This is discussed when the body was described as a symbol for a shared humanity, building forth on the potential of the body as a symbol was mentioned by Douglas (1970) and Reischer&Koo (2004). The body in artistic photography has the potential to be recognized as a person, possibly provoking feelings of empathy. Furthermore context influences how people look at photographs. If there is no context, people associate a context with an image that can be compared and has a clear function. This function influences how they relate to and the way they identify with the photograph. In short, photography is rarely seen as factual, but as highly subjective in framing realistic aspects, that can be recognized by the audience but are not perceived as representing reality. From the photographer's perspective presentation is influenced by the model. How the body is represented by the audience is influenced by the context in which an image is placed.

By touching on the topic of recognition and empathy, a question arises around identification. There is a difference in how identification practices relate to the body in artistic photography concerning photographers and how they concern the audience of photography. The degree to which photographers identify with their work when presenting the body is very diverse and personal. Some photographers use photography as means for self-expression. Artistic photography would then function as emotional tool. When acknowledging that photography can function as emotional tool, photographs may contain emotional content in order to say something about contemporary phenomena. The audience also seems to experience this emotional content, as the ability of artistic photography to move people emotionally is given as a motive to spend time looking at this artistic photography. This emotional moving of the individual body, may cause expression of this emotion, thereby connecting the individual body to the social body through creation of a discourse. Identification rarely seems to be the case when emotional content is concerned. Rather a person seems to identify with an interest in a topic and the importance of this topic, possibly related to a subjectivity of an individual as described by Zingsheim (2011). In other words, photographers consciously choose how they relate their work to their individual selves. When photography is considered an emotional tool, identification is highly personal, but personal connection does not necessarily have to be clearly presented. Identification within the audience takes place on the level of interest. The audience seems to be able to identify with topics that are brought up by the photographer, valuing them as important. However, the body in artistic photography seems to be merely recognized, not identified with. The body in artistic photography can then be used to tell a story and creating a discourse around a certain topic.

While the body presented in artistic photography it is recognized as similar to the self, the body is often judged by its audience. It has been discussed before how judgement can concern how a healthy body should look, as well as how different body parts are valued. When a body does not meet norms as considered by the audience, the body becomes central in conversation, regardless of the surroundings in which the body is presented. This indicates boundaries concerning the body, as there are certain requirements that have to be met. Photographers seem to be touching upon norms indicating boundaries that surface when the body is presented in artistic photography. One example is the sexual connotation with which the nude body is often associated. Photographers indicated that they aimed to normalize this association by means of presenting it within artistic photography. Photography then can not only be an emotional tool, it can also function as a sociological tool, as stated before by Davenport (1991), aiming to contradict certain associations or boundaries that arise when people look at photography. Indication of boundaries through judgement by the audience and the photographed body as sociological tool, the body in this context can then function as a medium of social processes and social change, as stated by Wolputte (2004).

Photography as sociological and emotional tool for the photographer has the ability to be able to say something about certain phenomena in society, in order to raise awareness, to give a voice to,

create understanding, normalize and to challenge and to be a form of self expression. Photographers can experience empowerment as defined Papa, Auwal&Singhal (1997), by utilizing artistic photography to say something about a specific phenomenon, through visualizing an expression through the presentation of the body. Empowerment is then experienced through embodiment, the visualization of an idea, concept or feeling. When conveying or bringing across a message, photographers acknowledge that they are unable to control how the audience interprets their photographs, as acknowledged by Buikema (2009, 12); the interpretation of an image then seems to hold the power over the intention of the image itself. Control over the interpretation of embodiment is then not necessarily their aim, as not everybody is capable of understanding. In short, it is often assumed that there is just one photographic language, whereas there are many different photographic languages that can be differently interpreted. However, the aim of the photographer is not that its message will be understood, for it is acknowledged that not everyone does, but that a concern is voiced and awareness is created, regardless of interpretation by the audience.

The way artistic photography is perceived, is influenced by the context in which it is portrayed, as well as through structural boundaries concerning the body in photography that surface when the body is judged. At the same time the choice to look at art and what type of art is decided by the individual, based on experience and opinion. In other words, this choice for attention towards a representation in artistic photography or an engagement in a discourse surrounding artistic photography is influenced by these structures and personal experiences, a combination of structure and agency. The interaction between structure and agency create expectations of exhibitions through which decisions are made to go and look at something or not, and engage or not. Emotional content in photography seems to be provoking interest, with the possibility to start a discourse and to connect the individual body to the social body and the body politic, as theorized by Scheper-Hughes (*in* Wolputte 2004). It should be emphasized here that photography can provide an opportunity for empowerment through discourse. The choice of the individual to ignore, engage or resist with what is seen in artistic photography is highly personal.

In order to be able to say anything about sexual identity and its relation to the body, it is essential to see how notions of sexual identity are perceived within the art scene in Berlin. It became clear that, according to photographers, sexual identity must be considered as being part of an individual's identity. It is a construction that happens from within, and is therefore very personal, as also confirmed by (Degges-White 2000). This construction is not merely a binary look, as studied by (Rosario 2006), on the development of sexual identity, but is a combination of different things for each person. Both photographers and their audience commonly refer to gender when considering sexual identity. Furthermore, aspects of what sexual identity entail are that sexual identity is not only a feeling, it is also involves expression of this identity and an attitude towards tolerance of the sexual identity of others and a degree of openness about one's own sexual identity. Above all, sexual identity is a part of an individual's

identity. When linking this to the research site of Berlin, citizens of the city are considered exceptionally free as people have no embarrassment in showing their sexual identity.

What is also mentioned when considering the city of Berlin is that a discourse about sexual identity is very present. However, photographers mention that there are still certain things that can be overcome regarding sexual identity and its discourse within temporary society. Photography can hereby, again, function as an emotional and/or sociological tool, where photographers experience empowerment as to using the body in photography to reflect on discourses of sexual identity through embodiment. This can be either through personal connection to how sexual identity is perceived (emotional tool) or/and with the intention of contributing to the discourse around sexual identity (sociological tool). Making use of the nude body in a certain way, can for example be seen as attempt to create a more neutral view on the nude body separate from a commonly experienced sexual connotation. The body in artistic photography as described here would function as sociological tool. When talking about artistic photography as emotional tool, there is a large identification between the photographer and the image. Photographers' own sexual identity can influence their photographs, though some photographers intentionally do not draw attention to this, sometimes with the purpose of giving others a voice. This is a very personal decision.

How the audience looks at the body in artistic photography is also very personal. The audience individually chooses to look at something or to ignore this. If a topic or photograph is not understood, it is not experienced as interesting to the audience. Thus the impact of the image is limited when what is portrayed is not clear. The comprehension of artistic photography can influence the choice to look at and to engage with what is portrayed in artistic photography. This choice that can be related to understanding artistic photography is influenced by structural and personal aspects. Structural influences entail how a photograph is contextualized. We emphasize the environment of Berlin here, as it is mentioned before that a discourse around sexual identity is very present. It is then likely that there is wide interest in the topic of sexual identity already, providing more understanding and thus a possibly larger impact of artistic photography about sexual identity. When looking more closely at personal motivations, it becomes clear that photography around the discourse of sexual identity can also be differently interpreted. Some experience a sexual connotation with a body in artistic photography, where it is not necessarily intended or perceived by others. This interpretation cannot be controlled, but it can contribute to the overall discourse about sexual identity in artistic photography. In short, agency is influenced by structures and experiences of the individual and influenced if the audience looks at certain artistic photography and how the body in photography is looked at.

Finally, looking at the question posed within this research, we conclude that the (re)presentation of the body has the ability to start a discourse around sexual identity based on emotional content. For photographers, this presentation of emotional content is related to their personal connection to what their aim to portray regarding sexual identity or to who they choose to give a voice. The possibility to

do this by means of photography as emotional and/or sociological tool, can provoke a feeling of empowerment through embodiment. How the representation of the body is perceived by the audience of artistic photography regarding sexual identity is always set into relation of the context of the society in which it is perceived. Interpretation of the image presented by a photographer can furthermore be differently interpreted by individuals, based on their personality and experiences. It can then be debated if embodiment in artistic photography can be transferred to the audience, as interpretation is in flux. What artistic photography does seem to do is create a dialogue between a photographer and its audience regarding the body in photography. Possibly setting it in relation to sexual identity, though that also depends on interpretation, and contributing to a discourse. Artistic photography seems to be a way of telling a story, voicing concerns about certain phenomena within society. Thereby starting a debate around sexual identity of which the outcomes cannot be controlled, but possibly influence how sexual identity is constructed as a concept in society and in the minds of individuals.

Discussion

Looking at the findings within our research, there are several things that have to be kept in mind. The next few paragraphs will touch upon the scale of the research and the influence of the subjectivity of the researchers. Furthermore, sensitivities within the use of certain methods will be debated. On top of that as will be the certain groups of actors that could not be reached within this research.

The contemporary art scene of Berlin is very large. Over the course of ten weeks there has been contact with several informants and galleries that were involved in this contemporary art scene. Nevertheless this included a small-scaled group of people that were part of the scene. We acknowledge the fact that this is due to a limitation of time and the limited accessibility of the art scene of Berlin. The accessibility of the art scene of Berlin was experienced as strongly depending on networking, which especially affected the research concerning the broadly defined population of the audience of artistic photography. As a researcher it was difficult to get into a scene where looking at art was accessible to everyone, but making connections seemed to depend on your relevance within the contemporary art network. This obstacle was overcome through participation in workshops organized by galleries, instead of merely accessible events. Access to the contemporary art scene of Berlin might have been easier if there would have been an additional function or job description linked to the researcher, and could have lead to different results.

Focussing on the research population the audience, there are two groups of people that have not been reached, due to limited accessibility to the contemporary art scene of Berlin. These groups can be described as online art platforms and people that consciously avoided certain exhibitions. The people behind online art platforms were hard to get in contact with, as the platforms do not have a physical address where they can be contacted. As a researcher you are then completely dependent on responses to virtual contact, such as emails, social media platforms, or accidental mutual contacts. Unfortunately, responses were not received and mutual contacts could not be utilized. The other group that was unable to be reached was the group of people that have seen press releases or (visual) announcements of exhibitions and did not intend to engage. The expectation of exhibitions provides people with a choice, and we have not been able to talk about these expectations with these people, as they are difficult to track. In other words, this research has not been able to cover the impact of visibility of the photographed body in daily life outside of galleries and museums context. However it is possible that the spread of visual images of certain exhibitions had an impact that this research was not able to take into account due to the research being focussed on informants met through galleries and museums.

The contemporary art scene in Berlin is, aside from being large, also in constant flux. How a researcher becomes acquainted with new exhibitions and chooses to go to one exhibition instead of the

other influences the research. This concerns validity within the research. Together with timing of the research and the accessibility of the research population, choices that have been made by the researcher regarding the research are often subjective and are hard to repeat. To surpass this difficulty in validity, this research emphasizes that it provides a certain perspective on the body in photography and sexual identity that is not regarded as being the truth, but merely a truth.

For future research towards the body portrayed within photography and its relation to the construction of sexual identity, it would valuable to consider another context as to the city the research is done, to provide for different perspectives. As mentioned in the empirical chapters some photographs sell better in one city compared to the other. This indicates that there are different perspectives in various contexts on certain topics, such as sexual identity, touched upon through contemporary photography. This can then add to the anthropological understanding of the construction of sexual identity within contemporary society. Another suggestion for future research would be to specify research populations in similar research more towards one certain group within the artistic photography scene. The body in artistic photography itself is a very broad research field. Specification towards one particular community within the photography art scene in Berlin would most likely result in more depth towards relevant discourses within contemporary society.

This research has aimed to give directions for redefinition concerning the construction of sexual identity, as the existing literature narrowly focuses on sexual identity as sexual orientation. There have already been indications stating that this association is not all encompassing. However, new definitions have not yet submerged to fill this void in the literature. Within our research based informants perception towards sexual identity, we have found that sexual orientation is a combination of aspects that include feelings, attitudes and expression that is different for every person. However, due to the small scale of this research, we are suggesting that further study is needed to be able to establish a more grounded concept of the construction of sexual identity within social sciences.

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