Atget and I: a Comparative Photographic Reading

INTRODUCTION

This poster follows the completion of an undergraduate research project entitled "Photographers as Documentarians of Paris: An Analysis of Atget's and I's Photographic Confrontation with Pomona." The project, conducted during the summer of 2019, explored the works of the French photographer Eugène Atget and myself, focusing on our respective images of Pomona, the Roman goddess of abundance, and her relationship to Parisian landscapes.

METHOD

In my initial research as a freshman student, my goal was to process and understand a variety of documents, photographic samples, and design resources. This approach culminated in a specific research question: What role does photography play in reinterpreting historical objects in contemporary society?

I undertook this project to address the question of how photography, through visual analysis, can offer additional information about the photograph's subject. Ultimately, the images are not just representations of historical objects but are part of a larger conversation about their significance.

The approach I followed in this project is that of a documentary photographer's engagement with a monument to Pomona, a symbol for a time-worn and unfamiliar urban space. My goal was to explore the relationship between the statue and its setting, to analyze the statue's role in its context, and to understand its significance in the broader social and cultural context.

My research began with a comparative analysis of Atget's and my photographs of Pomona. I was particularly interested in the way the statue was depicted in our images, as well as the contextual factors that influenced our photographic choices. I sought to identify the common threads that connect our images and to explore the ways in which photography can contribute to our understanding of historical objects.

I believe that photography, through visual analysis, can offer additional information about the photograph's subject. Ultimately, the images are not just representations of historical objects but are part of a larger conversation about their significance.

The key theme in the project is the transformative power of photography, which can be used to reframe our understanding of historical objects. By examining Atget's and my images, we can gain a deeper appreciation for the monument's significance and its role in the cultural landscape.

I. MAKING: A COMPARATIVE READING

A. DESCRIPTION

Atget's "Tuileries – Jardin de Robespierre." This image depicts a statue in front of the Tuileries Palace, Pomona, a symbol for a time-worn urban space. Atget produced the photograph in 1911 using a camera and film. The image communicates Atget's response to the space, as well as his emotional response to the statue.

I photographed Pomona in front of the Parc de Sceaux, my image made in September 2019 during a study trip to France. The park was designed as a dynamic between the trees, "nature," and the statue, as "nature," and the statue, as a monument to Pomona, the Roman goddess of abundance. My role in the project was to interpret the space and to analyze the statue's role in its context, to understand its significance in the broader social and cultural context.

B. ANALYSIS

A comparative reading of these two images reveals the importance of their "making" contexts. Both images were created within distinct historical and cultural contexts, and their significance can only be fully understood within these contexts. For example, Atget's image was created during the French Revolution, a time of social upheaval and change, while my image was created during the twenty-first century, a time of rapid technological change and development.

Both images were created to communicate a particular message about Pomona, but their methods of communication were different. Atget's image was created with a high degree of technical skill and precision, while my image was created using a more intuitive approach. However, both images communicate a sense of Pomona's significance as a symbol of abundance and prosperity, and both images offer a unique perspective on this symbol.

C. CONCLUSION

I believe that photography, through visual analysis, can offer additional information about the photograph's subject. Ultimately, the images are not just representations of historical objects but are part of a larger conversation about their significance. By examining Atget's and my images, we can gain a deeper appreciation for the monument's significance and its role in the cultural landscape.