

EDITORIAL

Welcome in the digital world of the art and photo magazine *Camera Work*¹

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Dear reader and user of the digital facsimile *Camera Work*

First of all, welcome to the digital world of the art and photo magazine *Camera Work*. This open-access-version of *Camera Work* is available for researchers as well as art and photo enthusiasts around the world. All materials are strictly meant for non-profit use.

What is *Camera Work*? To quote from our [website at the University of Zurich](#): “The magazine *Camera Work*, published in New York from 1903–1917 and dedicated to the advancement of photography as art, enjoys the status of a modern icon in the history of photography and the history of art. Still, the quarterly has never been properly investigated with advanced methodological and technological approaches. For the first time, this project [the “*Camera Work* pilot project” and the research project called “*Camera Work*. Inside/Out”; B.G.] analyses *Camera Work* in its entirety as total work of art, including imagery across various media, the specifically photographic interplay between original and reproduction, interrelations of image and text, and international networks of people and discourses.” To say it with a less academic tone one may quote an article from the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* published December 31, 2017 under the headline “1917 Geburt der Moderne: ‘*Camera Work*’ am Ziel” (“1917 Birth of the Modern: ‘*Camera Work*’ at the finish”): “Es gibt kein bedeutenderes Fotomagazin als ‘*Camera Work*’, eine Vierteljahresschrift, so aufwendig produziert, dass jede Seite für eine Ausstellung taugt.” (“There is no photo magazine more significant than ‘*Camera Work*’, a quarterly journal produced in such an extravagant manner, that each page is suitable for an exhibition”).

The editor of this magazine was Alfred Stieglitz, a tireless promoter of photography as art, and, as we would say today, an international networker if not global player within the system of the arts. Would he have approved of our project, even if it does not worship his persona but rather attempts to bring the magazine more into focus? I think: Yes, because it was his goal to act internationally and to let the texts and pictures of *Camera Work* speak for themselves – in order to develop and establish a new art. (This incredibly influential endeavour of Stieglitz and his circle for the formation of modern art, and not only for photography as art, has been a research topic for a very long time; please see our [international bibliography](#)).

¹ This editorial will be updated according to new developments regarding this digital research project. In addition, it will be supplemented by a user’s guide in the near future. Many thanks to Stella Jungmann, M.A., assistant and doctoral student at the chair for history of fine arts at the Institute of Art History, University of Zurich, who kindly edited this text and contributed important ideas.

The conference “[Camera Work: History and Global Reach of an International Magazine](#)” at the University of Zurich was one of the milestones of this digital research project that began as a first idea of mine in the beginning of 2015, namely the vision to revive interest in and to develop new knowledge about *Camera Work* by making use of the tools of what has been called “digital humanities”. This project enabled us to [invite international speakers to our conference in 2018](#) and publish a [short film](#) on *Camera Work* on our website.²

Unpacking *Camera Work*

In fact, all began with unpacking the issues of *Camera Work* in the rooms of Christie’s in Zurich in 2015, where the whole convolute had been sent from Paris. Why Paris? Because in the context of Paris Photo 2014, Christie’s organized an auction with photo historical works from the collection of the former Swiss art gallerist Dr. h. c. Kaspar M. Fleischmann, and although this auction was all in all (or Fleischmann would say “more less than more”) successful, he had decided in the course of that auction not to sell his *Camera Work* convolute at a time when prices for historical materials of photo history were clearly in decline. I should clarify that that auction was meant to raise funds to support the research at the Center for Studies in the Theory and History of Photography at the Institute of Art History, a center which I have the pleasure to lead and direct as a substantial supplement of my chair for history of fine arts at the University of Zurich. The Center for Studies in the Theory and History of Photography is mainly funded by the Dr. Carlo Fleischmann Foundation. The university chair for history of fine arts, founded and implemented in the 1980s, has in recent years often been called a professorship of or chair for history of photography, and although that is formally wrong, my personal devotion to support photography as part of the history of art legitimizes such floatingly discursive denominations (a topic that I discuss in more detail in the article “[Fotografiegeschichte in Forschung und Lehre – ein Sommernachtstraum](#)”, “Photo historical research and education – a summer night’s dream”). It is also not entirely insignificant that it was a foundation in support of education, namely the before-mentioned [Dr. Carlo Fleischmann-Foundation](#), that allowed the study program for the history of photography at the University of Zurich to flourish, whereas research was more or less secondary. This imbalance between education and research was to change in 2011 due to numerous and ongoing initiatives to raise funds for additional research support. It was indeed the immense success of a [charity auction in 2011](#), which encouraged us to repeat such an event in favour of in-depth research in the theory and history of photography. However, due to the challenges in the art market as well as in the financial sector, the [auction in Paris in 2014](#) and also its financial and administrative consequences in the beginning of 2015 did not at all meet usual

² The papers of this conference will be published in 2019. Recently a part of my evening lecture has been published in German and English under the title “The Photographic Persona and the Significance of Photography as Art” in the exhibition catalogue [Künstler Komplex : fotografische Porträts von Baselitz bis Warhol : Sammlung Platen; Artist Complex : photographic portraits from Baselitz to Warhol : Platen Collection](#), Heidelberg, Berlin : Kehrer, 2018, pp. 37-126.

expectations. And, as a result, *Camera Work* came back from Paris to Zurich. – The purpose of unpacking the issues of the magazine back in Zurich was to check whether all materials, covers and pages of these highly fragile objects were intact and complete. It may seem strange that a university professor sits down at Christie’s to check through such materials. However, I felt obliged to take on this task myself together with an assistant of mine, because I saw, admired and respected the philanthropic approach of Mr. Fleischmann, an approach that is so very rarely found in Europe as opposed to the United States.³ I did not want him to be even more upset because of potential damages of his precious set of *Camera Work*. Not being involved in aspects of the art market myself, especially because from an ethical standpoint it is simply not allowed for a scholar to get involved in such a business, I was quite happy with the results of that auction, because in the end these funds – though certainly not an outstanding sum on the free market, a substantial sum within the academic system – allowed me to pursue at least a pilot project to digitalize *Camera Work* and to put together a small international research team.

If you will, it was more or less just by chance at this moment at Christie’s, due to the failure in Paris to sell *Camera Work*, that I had the inspiration to develop something that had not been done before. Chance, failure and faults are often the great innovators in the history of knowledge.⁴ And indeed, even the materiality of *Camera Work* would not have come to my attention without that special moment at Christie’s in Zurich, that moment that initially seemed to be the end of a failed attempt of raising funds, but was in reality the beginning of a research project. “Eureka” means, as Felix Philipp Ingold has pointed out, the expression of an effect of surprise.⁵ And surprise not only, as I would add, of the emerging of a great idea, but surprise to find a completely desolate situation: some of the covers and pages crumbled under my fingers, the plastic wrapping of each issue did not seem to me appropriate for those diverse papers, tissue papers to protect the images would have been most important, in short, restorative rescue and protection initiatives were long overdue. This indeed was my first proactive step: to find an expert who would secure the whole convolute in a state-of-the-art manner. In a short, above already mentioned [film](#) made in Zurich in 2017, you can see how this journal is handled today, and how the boxes, which “house” *Camera Work* look like, and also how the turning pages of *Camera Work* sound.

In any case, it was not only the fragility of the journal as a material object alone that caught my attention. No, it was the graspable historical importance of that journal, and also the fascinating question of how we could with today’s research tools investigate all texts and images of this most significant art journal including the advertisements as mirrors of the

³ A big thank you at this point to Dr. Sophie Junge, who supported these first steps towards a research project with continuous enthusiasm and supervised the restorative initiatives.

⁴ See Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, *Experimentalität : Hans-Jörg Rheinberger im Gespräch über Labor, Atelier und Archiv*, Berlin : Kadmos, 2018.

⁵ Felix Philipp Ingold, “Das Glück des Zufalls: Die Muse küsst, wie und wen sie will“, in: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 9.10. 2018.

material and technological history of analogue photography. Moreover, as a classically trained art historian, my interest was to see *Camera Work* as a revolutionary beginning of photography as art in order to compare that claim and its development with the fact that photography today plays a vital role in the concert of contemporary art on a global scale. Photography both as art around 1900 and contemporary art cannot be understood in its entirety without quoting, incorporating and referencing the avant-garde painters of the 19th and early 20th century. Like the texts in *Camera Work*, today's writing about art is still informed by the beginning of art critical writing in 18th century France and England, namely the practice of comparing works of art with established historical positions of art, the practices of installing a discursive aesthetic judgment with repeated formulas and topoi, and last but not least the attempt to institutionalize the work of art for posterity.⁶ The history and theory of art as a reference point in the system of art and photography is not well understood, which is all the better, since it leaves us something to discover within *Camera Work* and beyond.

What *Camera Work* wanted and claimed in the age of analogue photography sees its fulfilment or highpoint in the digital age and contemporary art, linking as such the analogue and the digital in many ways. This is but one theoretical and aesthetic aspect that allows us to understand that the paradigmatic “rupture” between analogue and digital as announced so frantically in the 1980s and 1990s was just another narrative element in the many beginnings and endings of photographic and art history,⁷ beginnings and endings that were and are soon to be revised. Indeed, the fact that *Camera Work* is digitalized does not mean that we discard the original. On the contrary: consulting the original for all its colours, haptic quality, and even the sound of the paper (!), is indispensable for a researcher. However, the digital facsimile allows us to roam through all texts and images when and how we wish, to divide it into intelligent parts and to put those parts together in order to better understand, to learn about an endeavour that meant so much for generations of photographers and photo and art historians alike.

There was also another, more personal and at the same time quite eager motivation to start this project. Since my time at the Institute of Advanced Study, Princeton – and even before, but without opportunities to address such longings – I was interested in widening my art-history-horizon towards Asian Art History. Thanks to Nicola Di Cosmo and Yve Alain-Bois who initiated an ongoing, regular workshop together, my wish to expand the knowledge of “my” discipline found fodder. It could not have been more perfect timing, when I received a call from an art history department with an established section on East Asian Art History – and that was and is the Art History Department at the University of Zurich. Thanks to this wonderful coincidence, I could devote myself more firmly to this subject – with excursions in collaboration with colleagues, with research projects, conferences und lectures all transpassing the boundaries of the inner structures of art history. To come to my last point: It was

⁶ See Grave J, Söntgen B. „Innerer Widerstreit. Kunstkritik, von ihren Anfängen her gesehen“, in: *Texte zur Kunst*. 2012 (87): pp. 62-83.

⁷ Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with desire: the conception of photography*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1999.

indeed my interest to expand my intellectual horizon that lead me to my interest in the global inherent themes as well as in the global impact of *Camera Work*. Not too surprisingly, I focused on Japan, but not only because there is much of Japan inherent in the issues of *Camera Work*. And not only, because Japan was such a great inspiration of and for modern art. But more interestingly, because the United States of America and Japan were rather young nations at the time of their step into the history of art and the beginning of the history of modern art especially. How was it possible to become part of that history – made in Europe – and not only participate but make original contributions? Struggles and opportunities were clearly ahead – before and around 1900. And on board was photography – from the start of that challenging endeavour to become a part of the world’s modern art community. It is as if we could see much of the challenges of contemporary global art mirrored in the situation back then; and as such *Camera Work* becomes an important player in our thinking about phenomena and processes of our present.

The Making of a Research Project. Collaborations and Copyrights⁸

The Swiss Institute for Art Research, or [SIK-ISEA](#), was the perfect host for this project over the last years. Perfect because we, my research team and I, were looking for an institution that would be able to keep the originals, in fact over fifty issues of *Camera Work*, published between 1903 and 1917, in good condition while at the same time allowing access to the originals for us as researchers. I am quite aware that we sometimes heavily overstretched the capacities of all persons who work at the SIK-ISEA, who have their own projects and deadlines to address. However, we always were welcomed with endless patience and enormous friendliness. We are indebted to the director, Dr. Roger Fayet, who has the skills of a special agent behind the curtains keeping all and everything in tune. Very supportive from the start was also Dr. Matthias Oberli, the Abteilungsleiter Kunstdokumentation (Department Head of Art Documentation), as well as Michael Schmid lic.phil., Leiter des Schweizer Kunstarchiv (Director of the Swiss Art Archive), who stood at our side whenever we needed to check the originals. This was particularly the case during the long phase of comparing and correcting the digital facsimile and the originals page by page.

Although there has been much focus on digital humanities, particularly in the last decade, the realizability of such a project was not at all guaranteed. Only very few institutions are able to provide a full workflow and competence for such an endeavour. With the assistance and advice from an international advisory board, I managed to find a collaboration partner at the University Library Heidelberg in the person of the chief librarian Dr. Maria Effinger.

This library has a special funded research focus on art history, particularly on international art magazines. As a result, the University Library of Heidelberg also digitalizes highly precious

⁸ The following text is based on my introductory remarks for the above-mentioned conference in March 2018. It was due to the tireless work and enthusiasm of Dr. Maria Effinger and her team that we were able to announce that *Camera Work* went open access in time for the opening of the conference and thus in front of an international audience of scholars and interested guests from the wider public.

books and manuscripts from the library of the Vatican in Rome. Hence, I was quite enthusiastic when the chief librarian agreed to host *Camera Work* as a digital facsimile and, more importantly, offered to assist with our long and complicated work flow, in not only scanning all issues of that magazine but also, for example, to link texts and images to their international library system. This was time-consuming work, matched only by the work of my research team who delivered to the librarians tables of contents for every issue. It was not always easy to hold on to this workflow that emerged sometimes as a seemingly endless river of unexpected details that had to be discussed and problems that had to be solved. However, together we managed to climb the mountains and managed to stay in a positive mood.

Initially, it was not our initial idea to make this digitalized version of *Camera Work* accessible online, but after two German-speaking reviewers voiced their doubt that such a step would be possible, I took on this task as a primary challenge. I should clarify that we handed in an application for funding, and that we had two excellent international reviews, but also two further reviews in German that left us as a team puzzled, because these anonymous reviewers claimed that this project would be impossible to realize, although we had the University Library Heidelberg on board, an institution with by now worldwide fame for their digital research projects. On the other hand, did these reviewers have a point regarding their fundamental doubts about the project? No and yes. No: Because you, dear reader and user, are on the website of this open access-version of *Camera Work*. Yes, because it was not foreseeable that such a step would be possible without a model at hand for such a digital project. Innovation is often not foreseeable. And, as one of the researchers in my team said: “We were simply too early.” This means: Too early for an academic system that negotiates hypes and fashionable keywords before practicing, doing research with brand-new tools. At the moment, we are still far away from using the digital tools and their potential for art history research on a regular basis. Funding goes mainly – or let us say much too often only – into building up infrastructure. However, time flies. Much time is wasted on basics while generations of researchers around the world are frantically waiting to produce new knowledge. The result is that those who cannot wait cooperate with individuals and institutions who have also decided for themselves: We cannot wait.

If I could start this project again, I would insist on more and regular meetings between librarians and researchers, because that is the great opportunity of digital research projects: to bring expertise from all sides more firmly into contact in order to achieve new insights on all sides, for the humanities and for the international library system, as well as for advanced technological development. What is not well understood on all sides, but possibly especially on the side of political decision makers, is the fact that such projects need and produce a lot of handiwork, which means the need to fund not only researchers but also team workers in transnationally interconnected libraries. To think that it is enough to install one “IT person” for a large digital project in the humanities, at universities or museums – be it a digital edition or a project on a global scale – is a huge misunderstanding of how „work“ has transformed in the digital age.

Despite all doubts and obstacles, it was possible to announce that this Zurich-Heidelberg made digital version is online, and it seems that we were able to solve all copyright claims – the first project ever in Europe to get to this point, as far as I know. With this step, we share attempts in the United States and also in other countries to bring *Camera Work* in front of an international audience again. Some comparable projects like the one [at the Brown University](#) have stopped working on their digital version, and other private initiatives have compiled their digital versions from all kinds of internet resources and different convolutes of *Camera Work* (see, for instance the [Art Institute of Chicago](#) or the [HathiTrust Digital Library](#)). All these projects have slightly different approaches, hence these various potentials should be linked together in the near future. Also, museums have strong holdings related to *Camera Work*, and it was one of our research ideas to link all such holdings around the world with the digital version, so that researchers and interested photo and art enthusiasts would be able to use the database as a window into international collections as well as insight into the oeuvres of all photographers and writers that were involved in making *Camera Work*. If this can be done in the near future, it could be a wonderful contribution to the global history of art and literature. The making of *Camera Work* and its afterlife in an international context would and could be fantastically visible through such a further developed database, and I hope that one day funding for such a big follow-up project in the global digital humanities can be raised. Let that be music for the future while we concentrate for the moment on what has been reached and how the academic community looks for new, fresh perspectives to understand *Camera Work* in its full-depth and international impact.

For the milestone that we have reached now, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the tireless collaborators in Heidelberg, especially to Dr. Maria Effinger, the chief librarian for art history there, and to the research team around me. My thanks go to Dr. Nanni Baltzer, Dr. Catherine Berger, Ms. Laura Gronius, Ms. Nadine Jirka, Dr. Sophie Junge, Dr. Patrizia Munforte, Dr. Thilo Koenig, and Dr. Marc-Joachim Wasmer. Almost all of these positions were partly or entirely financed by the resources from the two above-mentioned charity auctions initiated by Dr. h.c. Kaspar Fleischmann in collaboration with Christie's in 2011 and 2014. Kaspar Fleischmann is a tireless supporter of the study program in the history of photography at our art history department, and a promoter for further research in the history and theory of photography. Many heartfelt thanks to him and his profound trust in all the researchers and docents that have been and are involved in his visionary project to devote all of his efforts into what he discovered for himself as an endlessly fascinating medium of art. My promise back then, when the preparations for the charity auctions started, was to create something sustainable, not just a project that comes to an end and might be forgotten at some point. With the open-access digital facsimile, we have created such a state-of-the-art research object that is nicely nestled among an almost daily growing number of important art magazines worldwide, digitalized by Maria Effinger and her team. Some day in the future, such magazines will belong to the usual object of research for art and photo historians, while at the moment, this is still a brandnew sector in our field. The reason why magazines have long been ignored

is that, among other reasons, without the digitalization the material of such magazines, texts and images are overwhelming and not possible to handle for an individual. With the structured database, the control over this material is possible in many ways. There is still much to do, namely making that digital version even better, even more flexible, even more research-friendly. But for now, we have reached a step from where such refinements are possible, and I will certainly attempt together with the colleagues in Heidelberg and international scholars to work on that refinement in the future. Part of such future steps will be to connect the project to other ones that have recently emerged: one such project is the compiled digitalization of the journal *Sturm*, which is particularly interesting in comparison with *Camera Work*, because *Sturm* was like *Camera Work* much more than a magazine: Both were directly connected to galleries, exhibitions, networks of art critiques and artists; they were conglomerates in the realm of modern art. The reconstruction of all these ties and the digital building up of inter-connections of materials regarding the reconstruction of exhibitions, the digitalization of correspondence around all of these initiatives to promote modern art will be a challenging and fruitful scientific endeavour for the future.⁹

After having been confronted with many obstacles in the course of this project, I have come to realize that here in Europe we should try to develop something that has been installed in the academia and museum world in the United States, namely FAIR USE for historical materials such as texts and images for non-commercial, purely research-centred projects. At the moment, we have an all-too-complicated and also not reasonable copyright-system that allows copyright holders to intervene in research projects, a practice that should be addressed as a severe problem. It is not enough that national funding institutions ask researchers how they will handle the issue – and our project has certainly contributed in installing such new rules. However, it would be far more practical not to leave this issue to individuals or research teams, but to find institutional solutions. I think large funding institutions in Europe such as the Swiss National Science Foundation and the German Research Foundation would be capable to find a transnational solution for the humanities.

This is in itself an insight that I would not have been able to formulate two years ago. As such the project was an enormous learning-by-doing process for which I am very grateful, because this process has opened the horizon for all who were and are involved. At this point, it is also fair to admit that at the point when we handed in an application for substantial funding with the Swiss National Science Foundation, the fact that copyrights might be a possible problem was not on our radar and not even on the radar of the collaborators in Heidelberg, since Heidelberg as well as the ETH (Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich or the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology) who also handles digital projects, although without an art history emphasis, have the practice to go online and see what and if something happens.

⁹ See the announcement on the website of the Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur Mainz: <http://www.adwmainz.de/nachrichten/artikel/der-sturm-geht-als-digitale-quellenedition-online.html> ; see also the link to the project website: <https://sturm-edition.de/projekt.html> .

In the words of the internationally famous pioneer for digital art history, uttered at our [international In-house Conference at the SIK-ISEA](#) in 2016, [Prof. Dr. Hubertus Kohle](#), this is “dirty publishing” in a time when clear transnational rules for digital projects and digital publishing are lacking. I personally think that for the moment this practice is better than automatically closing the doors on certain digital projects in the humanities. However, this practice can only be an improvised step in a longer process towards FAIR USE. Another aspect that has come to my mind is the question: Do reproductions like those in *Camera Work*, including the photogravures that we treat as originals, but which are nothing else but reproductions, really underlie a copyright, if we consider that a copyright can only be asked for on grounds of an original work of art? The digitalization is in addition not a publication, but a transformation of an historical material object into a digital research object. I leave you with these thoughts, which hopefully have given you some insights about the processes in which the humanities are involved in this age of digitalization.

Bettina Gockel
Zurich, December 2018