

# **What is it ‘to move’ a photograph?**

## **Artistic tactics for *destabilizing* and *transforming* images**

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### Abstract

This dissertation presents the findings of practice-led research that explores how artistic practices intervening in existing images, ‘move’ images — in the sense of destabilise and transform. The notion ‘to move’ has guided this investigation and it has offered new insights on artistic tactics regarding the operations of de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation, montage, the categories of the still and the moving image and the ‘affective encounter’ that stems from touching. In parallel to exploring the artistic tactics of gleaning, working with archives, the performance-lecture, montage and a tactic I have called ‘performing documents’, this enquiry has also examined how images function, as this was crucial to conduct operations with them.

Artistic practices that stemmed from existing images have been common over the last three decades. In the 1980s they operated through an understanding of the notion of ‘appropriation’ as ‘pastiche’. In contrast, this investigation, which also begins from working with existing images, explores photography through performance. These two artistic forms have often been defined in oppositional terms. This enquiry argues for a ‘performative materiality’ to renovate the discourse on images instead of the usual privileging position of the ‘textual’. This renovation deterritorialises and reterritorialises territories that are usually separated, in this case photography and performance, representation and presentation: putting these categories under pressure.

As a result, this investigation re-conceptualises the notion of *appropriation*, through the practice of *gleaning*, towards an ethical and regenerative mode based on ‘invocation’, ‘restitution’ and ‘profanation’. Specifically, the work/research makes evident a form of ‘affective encountering’ of images which acknowledges their materiality, advocating that the materiality of images contributes to the functioning of images as much as the indexicality (image content). Through a focus on the materiality of images, this enquiry has provided new, nuanced insights on the issue of the agency (and resistance) of images, on the images that challenge the categories still and moving image, and a shift from photographs as containers of time to producers of time.

This investigation, based on the question “What is it ‘to move’ an image?”, has generated new insights and reflections which allow us to understand images in a way that is more nuanced and dynamic, and yet grounded in their material properties. Rather than approaching these problems through prevailing methods, this enquiry has undertaken an innovative performative approach that explores the space *in-between* images, criss-crosses the *margins* and touches photographs. This performative approach—these affective encounters—have been central to challenge assumptions and offer new understandings of what images are and, more importantly, ‘how they do what they do’.