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membrana/2

# Grimace





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**More Grimaces, Fewer Smiles  
Notes on The Thin Line Between  
The Smile and Grimace in  
Photographic Depictions**  
Asko Lehmuskallio

Grimaces are important facial expressions used in situated interactions for questioning social hierarchies and power relations. They counter the warmth of the smile and its invitation for shared foci of attention. In the photographs that surround us, the grimace is seldom to be found, whereas the smile is an almost ubiquitous expression in depictions in our “facial societies” (Macho, 2011). Interestingly, the need for depicted smiles provides us increasingly with images that depict not only smiles but, ever more, “as if” versions of smiles, facial expressions that we can identify with Goffman as “teeth grimaces”. While teeth grimaces reveal some aspects of how smiles are produced for depiction for our facial societies, the paper further suggests that we need more grimaces and fewer smiles in order to remember how social hierarchies and power relations, far from being abstract phenomena, must be constantly renegotiated in situated interactions.

Keywords: face, grimace, communication, social interaction and the grimace, symbolic power and the grimace

**Snapchat: a Brief Encounter**  
John Hillman

For users of the image messaging Snapchat app, expressiveness is largely mediated through in-built filters and extensive use of short pieces of text and emojis. It is also contingent upon the disappearance of the image after a set time. The certainty these images will not be retained - that they will disappear - sanctions a degree of liberty in what is sent between users. However,

there is also a reciprocal level of trust, since despite the app itself having no feature to save an image, recipients can screen capture the images they receive. Users do receive notification that their image has been saved in a screen capture, and this is likely to elicit a spontaneous reaction of despair, a breach of the code of disappearing images that is implicit in Snapchat’s communication method. In this essay, I propose Snapchat portraits express not the face as image but image as perplexing, disappearing, mutating phenomena. With their filters and distortions they unsettle our notions of the index and with their built in disappearance they challenge any notion of image as a memory prosthetic. Snapchat, as a form of portraiture, is not engaged with likeness or reproducibility. Instead, it stresses duplication, disguise and disappearance as the dominant features of contemporary culture.

Keywords: Snapchat, Snapchat portrait, mediated image, algorithms, selfies, digital form of photography

**When the Landscape of the Face is  
Hidden from Us**  
Paula Horta

How do we respond to the vulnerability of the Other when we do not see his face? How do photographer and viewers position themselves ethically in relation to the (hi)story of suffering they are called to witness? These are the questions that steer my reflection about Jillian Edelstein’s unpublished photograph of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Taken shortly after the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) completed its work, the photograph evokes the moment during the TRC hearings when the Archbishop, Chairman of the commission, laid down his head and wept. Drawing on Emmanuel Levinas’s conceptualization of “the face”;

I discuss how affect is produced within and through Edelstein’s photograph, and specifically how the affective quality of the photograph both contributes to an understanding of the experience of suffering within the context of the TRC and summons an ethical response from the viewer.

Keywords: Jillian Edelstein, Desmond Tutu, Emmanuel Levinas, photography portrait, gesture and photography

**Good Girls Grimacing  
Grimacing and the Economy of Excess**  
Monika Schwärzler

While at the end of the 19th century grimacing was considered a symptom of schizophrenia, and pulling faces was regarded as an assault on the decency and reliability of facial features, grimacing has become a frequent practice on social media today. My argument will be that the distorted physiognomy of Facebook users features ready-made expressions that do not correspond with any deeply felt psychic reality. There is nothing essential about the contractions of the facial muscles enacted by these members of the social media community. They are playing, trying out poses, and emulating already approved face farces. My thesis is that by performing these grimaces young people create a reality of surplus and excess which they would otherwise miss. If everyone is supposed to enjoy him/herself to the fullest, then the excessively grimacing party manages to communicate this effectively. Grimacing has become a performative act of talking or photographing oneself into a feeling of high life. To prove my point, I will do a close-reading of a commercial that most recently appeared on billboards in Vienna, depicted a young woman performing one of the standard grimaces. The verbal

message said, “Do not just stand but pose,” implying that the model is given credit for the extra effort that “posing” requires. Subsequently, her figure morphs into the classic disciplined body, well known as one of the main battle zones of economic interests and power plays.

Keywords: grimace, photography, social media, selfie culture, expressive performance

**The Black Box Grimaces Back**  
Devon Schiller

With the algorithmic age of computable emotions, an increasing number of digital artists base the form of their Internet or sculptural installation on Automated Facial Expression Analysis (AFEA), and its functionality achieved via the photographic documentation in face databases. These contemporary artists make visible a digital habit of thought that objectivates the human face into a plastic grotesque of grimacing extremis, and the self *inside out* into the universal or utilitarian. Yet, most AFEA systems – a term little clarified and much confused with facial recognition or biometrics – are “black box” frameworks. Introduced by the technological industry and scientific experts, such proprietary closed source algorithms veil the majority of program functionality input from available data output, hiding *how* it works from immediate observation by artist and audience. By problematizing Julius von Bismarck’s *Public Face* (2008-14) and its intermedial genealogies, I probe the extent to which AFEA represents the face and its expression of emotion from a technostalgic view that reduces scientific complexity, while informing how we *think* about what we *feel* today.

Keywords: biometrics, automated facial expression analysis, facial recognition algorithms, photography, digital art and science

**Photography as a Small Language  
Interview with Robert Hariman**  
Ilija T. Tomanić

In the interview, Robert Hariman talks about his latest co-authored book *The Public Image: Photography and Civic Spectatorship* (University of Chicago Press, 2016), presenting the main argument that they put forward with John Louis Lucaites – that a paradigm shift is needed within the field of photographic theory in order to understand the changing social role of photography in contemporary societies. They argue for a redefinition of the medium’s “burden of representation”, embracing its limitations and treating it as a “small language”, firmly embedded within the notion of the vernacular. This move beyond simple politics of representation, he argues, should however not be apolitical. In fact, the paradigm shift is needed to re-politicise photography and therefore increase its political efficacy in the wake of unsustainability of the dominant neoliberal socio-economic order and the specific catastrophic idea of progress which it promotes.

Keywords: Robert Hariman, photography theory, modernity, progress, capitalism, grimace

**Dark Premonitions of the  
Anthropocene Era  
Peter Koštrun, Photographer and  
Visual Artists**  
Miha Colner

Although the interpretations of Koštrun’s works and his entire opus are undeniably multifaceted and open to different interpretations and readings, the article suggests that all his work does share a common meditative stillness and sense of solitariness. Peter Koštrun’s opus lingers on the intersection of pristine nature and

cultural landscape, on the intersection of the impact of humans on the environment and the insignificance of the individual in relation to nature. Even if Koštrun’s photographic motifs allude to archaism and romanticism, and are at first glance connected to the tradition of photographic pictorialism, they are in their essence distinctly modern, attached to the reality of the here and now. His expression is completely non-narrative in the classic sense of photographic representation, as the images do not tell a linear story, but are dedicated to visual language, which is (as opposed to the written word) always ambivalent and layered.

Keywords: Peter Koštrun, Anthropocene, melancholy, mortality, landscape, nature photography

**Staring at the Screen  
Interview with Photographer  
Robbie Cooper**  
Iza Pevec

From the beginnings of the photography, portrait photography has had a special aura – reading one’s own facial expressions and those of others is after all a very human trait. In his project Immersion, British artist Robbie Cooper presents a specific type of portraits – portraits of people as media consumers. We are all aware of the frightening statistics of the average number of hours spent behind the screen, yet Cooper’s intention was not to moralise. A diverse spectrum of people’s expressions captured during watching various media content tells only one part of our human story. In the Immersion, the screen becomes some kind of mirror, recording intense expressions of the portrayed persons, captured with an in-built camera. Because of the accompanying sound, we can guess what the people are watching – the content

includes everything, from video games, pornography to snuff movies. Stills from the movies have less documentary value. With the help of the high quality of the photos, the frozen grimaces become peculiarly similar to the classical portraits from the history of art. Almost eccentric grimaces confuse us and at the same time remind us how realistic virtual reality feels. Cooper had already explored our relationship towards virtual reality in his project *Alter Ego*, in which he sets the gamers of virtual games next to their avatars. He was interested in the human element of virtual worlds by questioning what imaginary personas can tell us about their creators. Throughout our conversation, questions of human consciousness arose.

Keywords: Robbie Cooper, media content, human character and facial expression, expressive face, grimace, role-playing

### Hangin' between Personal and Social Grimace

Ana Peraica

The article argues that contemporary selfie culture is fully organized around grimaces, one type of face succeeding the other. After being recorded plenty of times, the “duck face” and “fish face” have become almost natural and socially acceptable. Article questions this assumption asking if these types of faces have not in fact already existed before. Grimace can be a result of an inner input, such as pain or madness, distorting our natural face, which then covers up the natural grimace as clothes do our intimate body parts. Thus, there are funny and less funny, socially communicative and mirror grimaces, there are meaningful ones and completely meaningless distortions of one’s face. Discussing the works of both artists and scientists, such as (among others) Anton

Joseph Trčka, Alphonse Bertillon, Jean-Martin Charcot, Duchenne de Boulogne, Hannah Wilke and Sanja Iveković the article deals with the notion of the grimace as the posing in the intersection between public and private sphere.

Keywords: grimace, selfie, physiognomical science and art, burgeoisisation of art

### Conversation between Anne Noble and Geoffrey Batchen

Anne Noble and Geoffrey Batchen

In the conversation, two of the most prominent New Zealand authors in the field of photography talk about the body of work of Anne Noble’s Antarctica photography projects. *Had we lived* is a re photographic project reflecting on the tragedies of heroic age exploration (commemorating the centenary of the deaths of Robert Falcon Scott and his men on their return from the South Pole – Terra Nova Expedition or British Antarctic Expedition to the South Pole, 1912) and on the memory of Erebus tragedy of 1975, when a tourist plane flying over Antarctica crashed into Mt Erebus, killing all 257 people on board. Anne Noble re-photographed image taken by Herbert Bowers at the South Pole – the photograph of Scott and his men taken after they arrived at the South Pole to find Amundsen had already been and gone. *Phantasms* and *Nieves Penitentes* projects hint at the triumph of Antarctica over human endeavour and as a non-explorer type herself photographer Anne Noble states: “I rather liked this perverse reversal”. Both tragic events have an notable relationship to photography – Erebus in particular, as those who died were likely looking out of the aeroplane windows taking photographs at the time of impact. This relationship is addressed throughout the conversation between the

two, providing an insightful commentary on the questions of authenticity, documentary value and the capacity of photography to exist in the in-between spaces of thoughtful imagining, and rational dreaming.

Keywords: re-photographing, Antarctica, authenticity, documentary, photographic imaginary

**Ana Peraica** holds a Ph. D. in aesthetics of photography. After graduating from University of Zagreb, in fields of art history and philosophy, she became a researcher in art theory at the Jan Van Eyck Akademie, Maastricht, where awarded UNESCO-IFPC, In parallel she undertook three year doctorate course in cultural analysis, theory and interpretation at ASCA, University of Amsterdam and defended her thesis entitled *Photography as the Evidence* at University of Rijeka. She is an editor of the reader *Žena na raskrižju ideologija (Split, HULU / Governmental Office for the Equality of Rights Split, 2007)*, *Victims Symptom – PTSD and Culture (Institute for Networked Cultures, Amsterdam, 2009)* and author of *Sub/versions (Revolver Publishing, 2009)*. Her essays in domains of visual studies and media theory are/were published by many magazines and journals, such as *Springerin, Pavilion, Fotografija/Membrana, Afterimage, Leonardo*, etc.

**Anne Noble** (born 1954) from New Zealand is Distinguished Professor of Fine Arts (Photography) at Massey University, Wellington. Her lens based practice spans landscape, documentary, and installations that incorporate both still and moving images. Antarctica has been a focus over the last decade, an extension of her interest in how perception and cognition contribute to a sense of place. She has made three visits to Antarctica, the most recent in 2008, to complete three photographic book and exhibition projects: *Ice Blink (2011)*, *The Last Road (2014)*, and *Whiteout / Whitenoise* (forthcoming, 2017). In 2009 she received an Arts Foundation Laureate award in recognition of her contribution to the visual arts in New Zealand. She was the recipient of a 2014 Fulbright Senior Scholar Award. Her current still photographic and video installation projects are concerned with the decline of the honeybee and human relationships to natural biological systems.

**Asko Lehmuskallio** is a university researcher at the University of Tampere, in Finland, and an Adjunct Professor for Visual Culture Studies. His research focuses on media anthropology, visual studies, and digital culture, and he has studied and worked at universities in Finland, Spain, Germany and the US. Lehmuskallio is a founding member of the Nordic Network for Digital Visuality (NNDV) and chair of the ECREA TWG Visual Cultures and the Diaphanes network for interdisciplinary studies of visuality. His recent books include *Pictorial Practices in a “Cam Era”* (2012, Tampere Univ. Press), *#snapshot: Cameras amongst Us* (co-ed. with A. Rastenberger, 2014, Finnish Museum of Photography), and *Digital Photography and Everyday Life* (co-ed. with E. Gómez Cruz, 2016, Routledge). Currently, he works as principal researcher in the Academy of Finland project Digital Face (2016–19).

**Devon Schiller** is a Member of the Academic Staff in the Department of Image Science at Danube University, Austria. Originally from Boston, Massachusetts, He holds a BFA in Art History and Painting from the Kansas City Art Institute, an MA MediaArtHistories from Danube University, and is certificate trained in the Facial Action Coding System (FACS). From a theoretical framework of cognitive semiotics, emotions history, and image science, Schiller’s scholarship focuses on the media genealogies and visual rhetoric of physiognomy, the science of facial expression, and digital biometrics. He is also an internationally exhibited digital artist.

**Geoffrey Batchen**’s (born 1956) work as a teacher, writer and curator focuses on the history of photography. He is particularly interested in the way that photography mediates every other aspect of modern life, whether we’re talking about sex or war, atoms or planets, commerce or art. Besides

being an expert in the general theory and historiography of photography, Geoff has helped to pioneer the study of vernacular photography (photographs not intended as art, such as snapshots, commercial photos, and objects like photographic jewellery). He has published extensively, in eighteen languages to date. He is the author of *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* (1997, with subsequent translations into Spanish, Korean, Japanese, and Slovenian), *Each Wild Idea: Writing, Photography, History*(2001), *Forget Me Not: Photography and Remembrance* (2004), *William Henry Fox Talbot* (2008), *What of Shoes: Van Gogh and Art History* (2009, in German and English), and *Suspending Time: Life, Photography, Death* (2010, in Japanese and English). He has also edited an anthology of essays titled *Photography Degree Zero: Reflections on Roland Barthes’s Camera Lucida* (2009) and co-edited another titled *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis* (2012). Over the past twenty-five years, Geoff has also been involved in the international art world as a curator and editor.

**Ilija T. Tomanić** (born 1974) is Assistant Professor at the Department of Media and Communication Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. His primary research interest spans across the field of visual communication, with special focus on the social and political role of photography in contemporary mediated communication. His published articles and book chapters focus on photojournalism, the framing of news, visual representations of otherness and collective identifications. Ilija is the author of *Press Photography and Visual Framing of News* (2015, University of Ljubljana, Založba FDV). He is currently President of the European Communication Research and Education Association ECREA.

**Iza Pevec** (born 1987) finished the studies of art history and comparative literature. She has been writing about art and culture for some time, she was writing for Radio Student and since 2014 she is also working for Radio Slovenia – Program Ars. As a young curator, she was part of the project Zagon of Gallery Škuc and part of the Incubator for young curators, the program of the Centre and Gallery P74. Since 2013, she is also writing for the *Fotografija* and *Membrana* magazines.

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**Jan Babnik** (born 1977) lives and works as an editor, curator, writer and educator in Ljubljana, Slovenia. He is editor in chief of *Fotografija / Membrana*, a Slovenian magazine on photography, and director of Membrana Institute - publisher of the magazine *Fotografija* and *Membrana*, books on photography and photography theory, and organizer of education modules (School of Photography Criticism). He has been a member of the Slovenian Society of Aesthetics since 2005. In 2008 he finished his MPhil in Philosophy at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. He is a PhD candidate in the Philosophy and Theory of Visual Culture course at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Primorska.

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**Jasna Jernejšek** (born 1982) holds a BA in Cultural Studies and an MA in Media and Communication Studies from the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana. Since 2012 she is an editor of radio programme on contemporary visual arts Art-Area at Radio Student. She is a regular contributor to *Fotografija* magazine. Since 2013 she collaborates as project manager and curator with gallery Photon – Centre for Contemporary Photography and with festival Photonic Moments – Month of Photography. She lives and works in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

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**John Hillman** is an educator, image-maker and writer. Based in the U.K. his interests are focused around post-photography theory – an investigation into the contemporary account of what the image

is becoming. This has led to thinking through the aesthetic, philosophical and technological approaches to image making. Ultimately, his written work and his practice is an interrogation of how images operate in a contemporary culture, which is currently largely structured by the digital.

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**Miha Colner** (born 1978) has graduated from Art History and works as a freelance curator and art critic. Since 2006, he has collaborated regularly with the gallery Photon in curatorial arrangement and organization of exhibition projects. In 2006, he became a member of the project group Station DIVA at the SCCA Institute in Ljubljana, which is creating an archive and conducts research on Slovenian video art. In 2007, he co-curated and co-organized Break 2.4 festival, held biannually by K6/4 Institute. Since 2005, he has worked as an art critic and a regular member of the cultural department at Radio Student – he is an editor of the show on contemporary art *Art-Area*. He is also a regular external contributor to the daily newspaper *Dnevnik* and to the magazines *Fotografija* and *Art-Words*. He occasionally contributes to other specialist magazines on fine art and music, such as *Maska*, *Forum*, *Časopis za kritiko znanosti*, *Flash*, *Folio*, *Zarez*, *Art Kontura*, *Frakcija* (Croatia), *Foto dokumenti* (Serbia), *Flaneur*, *Cluster* (Great Britain), and *Sculpture Network* (USA).

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**Monika Schwärzler** is an Associate Professor at Webster Vienna Private University, Department of Media Communications; Doctorate in Philosophy from the University of Vienna; graduate training at the Museum of Modern Art in Vienna; taught at Webster University in St. Louis, MO and in the study abroad program of the University of Oregon; lectures at the International Summer and Winter School of the University of Vienna; founder and chair of the T.K. Lang Gallery at Webster University. Main fields of research: visual culture, art and media theory, history of photography, animation. Most recent publication: *At Face Value and Beyond. Photographic Constructions of Reality*, Transcript Verlag, 2016.

**Paula Horta** holds a PhD in Cultural Studies from Goldsmiths, University of London. She teaches at the Department of English Studies at the Faculty of Letters, University of Lisbon, and is a research fellow at the University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies (ULICES). Her current research interests focus on visual representation, narrative, and memory.

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**Robbie Cooper** (born 1969) is a British artist working in various media, including photography, video and video game modifications. He was educated in Kenya and the UK, before studying media production at Bournemouth College of Art. In 2002 Cooper embarked on *Alter Ego*, a long-term project that explored virtual online worlds and the identities people create within them. His *Alter Ego* photographs have been exhibited internationally and were published as a book in 2007. In 2008 Cooper began the *Immersion* project, in which he records the expressions of people watching TV, playing video games and using the internet.

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**Robert Hariman** (born 1951) is a professor of rhetoric and public culture at the department of communication studies at Northwestern University. He is the author of *Political Style: The Artistry of Power* (University of Chicago Press, 1995) and two volumes co-authored with John Louis Lucaites: *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy* (University of Chicago Press, 2007) and *The Public Image: Photography and Civic Spectatorship* (University of Chicago Press, 2016). His other publications include edited volumes on popular trials, prudence, post-realism, and the texture of political action, as well as journal articles on parody, allegory, banality, and other modes of public address. His work has been translated into French and Chinese. He and Lucaites post occasionally on photojournalism, politics, society, and culture at their blog [Nocaptionneeded.com](http://Nocaptionneeded.com).



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