

On Scale: ontological variations in photography

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Abstract

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The concept of scale refers to complex phenomena that vary within space, time, or other dimensions in the real world. Scale underlines the connection between a representation and its referent while using finite and discrete measurements to render infinite narratives and meanings. The concept of scale can be as familiar as undefined, having a variety of meanings depending on its operational context and disciplinary perspective. (Wells, 2013) In the specific context of lens-based arts, i.e., photography, the various approaches and implications of scale remain largely unanswered.

The photograph of a landscape or a bacterium is unlikely to be materialized in their real scale, its size would be, either, too big or too small for standardized observation. Scale anthropomorphises size, compressing physical and cultural geographies to pocket size, bringing distant perceptions to arm's length. As a concept, scale places humans at the centre of their own discourses while reinforcing human-centred taxonomies. Nonetheless, scalar variations are ontological to the photographic medium (Crowther, 2009), and have significant implications in the formation of individual narratives and political discourses, which are often made invisible or ignored. (Grau, 2003; Klein, 2004)

This presentation attempts to uncover some of its problematics and its overall impact in the interpretation and formation of the work of art. Its primary focus is on photography while considering other artistic practices in a nondisciplinary convergent approach to scalar variations of size.

References

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