Handout Study Guide: Session 5

19th C. Documentation: Objects & Events 1839-1890  Key Points to remember

-Which painter-photographer recorded through photographs, from 1851-54, the rebirth of the glass hall, The Crystal Palace at Sydenham in England, as well the installation of the exhibits for the industrial fairs?

-Who photographed old buildings and neighborhoods scheduled for demolition in France, in the 1860’s?

-19th C. photos of American industry concentrate on depicting the individuals responsible for “taming, dominating and bending to their wills…the vast virginity of the continent”, rather than the European expressive possibilities inherent in structural and mechanical forms. However there are exceptions, name at least one example which had visual impact?

-Which 19th C. photographer is best known for their work in China, by “Illustrations of China and its people”, in 1873-4?

-Which two 19th C. European photographers are best known for their work in Japan?

-Which 19th C. Japanese photographer further refined this genre of Japanese views, costumes, and trades?

-Who photographed Indians in North America, vestiges of a culture, he perceived as a “vanishing race”, in an aesthetic manner, softening forms and obscuring detail to emphasize his overall concept of the mythic nature of American Indian life?

-What was the first conflict to be thoroughly photographed with cameramen on hand from 1861 to the final surrender in 1865? Which photographer for this war had a visionary belief in the role of the camera as historian obeying his “inner spirit”?

-War photographers were interested in objectivity and craftsmanship, and the public had a desire for clear pictorial records which represented “truth” (close-ups, blurring, or distortion were would have been opposing to each). But there still was a need to invest the images with dramatic qualities consistent with this goal. Transcending the limitations of the inability to photograph live battle scenes which would have produced blurry results-thus a lack of “truth”, what technique was used as a stylistic device, which served to isolate and emphasize certain forms while investing the image with a sense of timelessness?

-What was the first photographic picture story of an event as it happened, its significance, and who was its photographer?

Images to remember for identification: Photographer, Title, Date, Process that could appear on quizzes or final exam.

Philip Henry Delamotte, The Upper Gallery Crystal Palace 1852-53, albumen silver print/wet collodion neg

Andrew J. Russell, Meeting of the Rails, Promontory Point, Utah, 1869, wet collodion/albumen print

Edward Curtis, Lummi Type-Lummi, 1899, glass plate/photogravure

Timothy O’Sullivan, Field where General Reynolds fell, Battlefield of Gettysburg, 1863, wet collodion/albumen print

Alexander Gardner ,Confederate dead gathered for burial. stereograph #554 Albumen silver print sept. 1862

Alexander Gardner, conspirator portraits, April 1865, wet plate/albumen print

Alexander Gardner, conspirator execution hangings, July 1865, wet plate/albumen print

Roger Fenton, Valley of the Shadow of Death, collodion/salt print, 1855

George Barnard, Burning Mills, Oswego, NY 1853, daguerreotype

George Barnard, Scene of General McPherson’s Death, 1864-65 from Photographic Views of Sherman’s Campaign, collod/albumen

Important Quotes: Be able to identify to whom these quotes are attributed.

-A spirit in my feet said ‘go’, and I went. -Matthew Brady, on why he photographed the Civil War.
General concepts to remember:

-The term documentation has come to refer to pictures taken with the intent to inform, rather than to inspire or to express personal feelings. These images emphasized a formal structure, that converted mundane activity such as work, into evocative experience.

- "Objective" documentation by camera coincided with the physical transformation of industrialized countries during the mid 19th C. Besides architectural possession, images were commissioned to show the demolition and reconstruction of urban areas, the erection of bridges and monuments, and the building of transportation facilities and roads. Industrial exposition and fairs that were held both symbolized and displayed the physical changes made possible by new technologies, and new materials, and were contrasted with the exotic products of underdeveloped nations.

-Critics in 1857, suggested that works such as Howlett’s documentation of the British steamship, Great Eastern, contrasted with artistically conceived and reenacted studio compositions that were being turned out at about the same time, depicted that the measure of camera art was in the sensitive treatment of actuality.

-Interest in industrial documentation in both Europe and American did not include images concerned with the actual conditions of work, -this concept and concern, did not manifest itself photographically until late in the 19th C.

-Marville’s images of the transformation of Paris, from medieval to a modern city, displayed a poignant regard for the character and texture of vanishing ways, indicating again that documentary records might be invested with poetic dimension.

-Almost every aspect of industrial Europe’s romance with the past, from the pilgrimage to ancient lands, to the installation of the object (archeological/cultural excavations), in a modern setting was captured by the camera.

-With the improvement of short focal length stereographic cameras, “instantaneous stereographic views” (crowded street scenes in America, England, France) began to appear around 1850—although the collodion technology was still burdensome. Photographers traveling to document “objective” records of indigenous cultures and ethnic customs around the world, were guided in their selection and treatment of material both by a sense of a “higher civilization”, and by the desire of commercial success. However, despite assumptions of superiority, these industrial nations had involved themselves in imperialist adventures around the globe- and the camera emerged as a capable tool for satisfying this need for sociological information.

-After the Meiji Restoration(late 1860’s), which introduced modern industrial ideas to Japan, photography began to spread.

-Tribal people in America, depicted through Indian life by photographers including, Gardner, Jackson, and Hillers, intrigued Americans interested in “exotic” customs.

-Scientific/ Medical Documentation, such as illustrations of disease, was used for research, administrative, diagnostic, and therapeutic functions. Also, magic lantern therapy was used for boredom, and inactivity, for mental patients.

-Sensitive to the transforming character of light, to the way it structures, reveals, and dramatizes, enabled 19th C. photographers to infuse gesture, expression, and especially, portions of the built and natural world with feeling. Converting a seamless “truthful” reality into formally structured images, these pioneer photographers demonstrated the unique potential and paradox of the camera to illuminate as well as record, investing ordinary events and objects with enduring resonance.

-Brady’s civil war project made it possible for photographers to gain experience needed for the documentation of the West-as they gave shape to photography’s promise to transform momentary life experiences into lucid visual expression.