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The Death of Photography

Susan Sontag argues, “needing to have reality confirmed and experience enhanced by photographs is an aesthetic consumerism to which everyone is now addicted” (24). I agree with this statement and many more of the claims made by Sontag because of my own experiences with photography and its usage in the dynamic society that we live in today. It is no secret that our society is enhancing rapidly in terms of technology and digital media. That includes the evolving nature of cameras. As an article written by Craig Mod explains, cameras were “bound to become networked lenses” from an early age; that’s indeed what they have turned into (6). Cameras have evolved into simple small lenses on sharp cutting-edge smartphones, such as the iPhone, that are used to snap pictures within seconds at any time and any place. These pictures are then used for purposes including, but not limited to, networking, popularity, and promoting self-image.

I believe taking pictures is a practice that unifies diverse individuals because it has become a commonality in everyone’s lives. Even the smallest experience, such as eating a slice of pizza or buying a new pair of shoes becomes photographed in today’s society in order to be shared with others. Craig Mod said himself, he switched from using the Panasonic GX1 to an iPhone 5 so he can “shoot, edit, and broadcast a photo within minutes” (5). The urge to take a picture has indeed become an addiction in many people’s lives and sharing that photo with the

world is an even greater addiction. I feel that people sometimes attend certain events just to have a picture to post on social media and share with others to fulfill a certain “expectation” held by society. As Sontag puts it, “photography has become one of the principal devices for experiencing something” (10). In other words, someone experiences something just to have it as a photograph, as an “appearance of participation,” not really knowing or understanding the value of the actual experience (Sontag, 10). I believe with the development of digital media and the many forms of social media, photography has been taken to new level. It has lost its purpose as a traditional form of art and turned into “a social rite” (Sontag 8). The expectations set by these social media outlets cause people to be so focused on taking the “perfect picture to post” that they forget to stop and enjoy the natural beauty of the experience. People are “compelled to put the camera between themselves and whatever is remarkable that they encounter” (Sontag 10). For instance, during concerts, people are often so focused on getting a picture of the artist on the stage, that they don’t live in the moment and indulge in the live music, which is an experience that a video cannot fulfill afterwards. For these reasons, I side with Sontag’s critique that photography as a means of visual communication has become an addiction and has deviated photography away from true art.

Works Cited

Mod, Craig. "Goodbye, Cameras." *The New Yorker*, The New Yorker, 18 June 2017. Web. 04

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Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. 1973. Print. 04 Mar. 2018.