

Welcome Remarks

Friday, May 10, 2019

Speaker

Clément Chéroux, Senior Curator of Photography, SFMOMA

00:09: CLEMENT CHEROUX: Hello, everyone. Thank you so much for being with us today. My name is Clement Cheroux. I'm the senior curator of photography here at SFMOMA. The subject that brings us together today is not new. As this caricature, entitled A Photographic Failure, published in 1847 in the British newspaper *Punch* shows, the fear of seeing images disappear is almost as old as photography itself. As if photography, which had offered the world the possibility of keeping a trace of everything, had at the same time given rise to the fear of seeing this trace vanish. The impermanence of photography is therefore, a fairly old question; but it has never been as urgent as it is today, especially with color processes. Is there a curator in this room that has never been confronted with the impossibility of presenting a color photograph because the print was too magenta? I do not doubt that many of you have already faced this delicate discussion with an artist refusing to have his vintage color print displayed. We all went through the difficult situation of dealing with a photographer proposing to replace his chromogenic prints purchased in the eighties or in the nineties with new inkjet prints, which were larger, more colorful, more contrasted, and so on.

01:52: When I was working at the Pompidou, I was regularly confronted with this question and the difficulty of taking the decision to answer it. Arriving at SFMOMA in early 2017, I was delighted to see that a small group of curators, conservators, and artists gathered around the Artist Initiative project and had begun to think about this issue. Together with Robin Clark, Erin O'Toole, Roberta Piantavigna, Corey Keller, Linde Lehtinen, and a few others, we have been thinking about the best way to keep moving forward on the issue of color reprinting, which will undoubtedly be the biggest

technical and ethical challenge that [the] photography and conservation department[s] are going to face in the next twenty years. It seems to us that the best way to respond must be first collective and collaborative. Our meeting today is a first response to address this need and to discuss this issue together. I hope that this symposium would be the first step in a joint venture that will lead to the establishment of a kind of guideline or a common museum policy for reprinting or not color photographs. I now give the floor to Robin Clark, director of the Artist Initiative project. Thank you so much.
[applause]