



Photography as a cultural and significant heritage: evolve or die

La fotografía como patrimonio cultural y significativo: evolucionar o morir

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Abstract

In the XXI century the art of photography has had a fundamental impact, it has managed to position itself with more strength due to the different technological advances, it is the image that predominates in our contemporary times, this has allowed divergent manifestations to come from every corner from the rural and the urban, One of the main references is undoubtedly Jesús Abad Colorado, who in his work has managed to show the most human side of the war, leaving aside the yellowish aspect that sometimes feeds the reportage and photojournalism, for this reason this research delves into the photographs of the armed conflict. The objective of this article is to position photography as a cultural heritage, due to the importance that photography has in the cultural legacy of societies. In this sense, can artistic photography about the conflict be considered cultural heritage?

Resumen

En pleno siglo XXI el arte de la fotografía ha tenido un impacto fundamental, ha logrado posicionarse con más fuerza debido a los diferentes avances tecnológicos, es la imagen la que predomina en nuestros tiempos contemporáneos, esta ha permitido que las manifestaciones divergentes lleguen de cada rincón desde lo rural y lo urbano, ha dejado entrever y dejar registro de las diferentes injusticias que vive América Latina y en este caso específico Colombia, uno de los principales referentes es sin duda Jesús Abad Colorado quien en su ejercicio ha logrado mostrar la parte más humana de la guerra, dejando de lado el amarillismo del que en ocasiones se alimenta el reportaje y el fotoperiodismo, por esta razón esta investigación se adentra en las fotografías del conflicto armado. El objetivo de este artículo es posicionar la fotografía como un patrimonio cultural, por la importancia que la fotografía tiene en el legado cultural de las sociedades, en este sentido ¿Puede la fotografía artística sobre el conflicto ser considerada patrimonio cultural?.

Palabras clave/ Keywords

Photography, conflict, cultural heritage, photojournalism, culture.

Fotografía, conflicto, patrimonio cultural, fotoreportaje, cultura.

Introduction

Within the framework of the consumer society, new technological advances lead to a rapid popularization of photography, to this, conflict photography should be defined as a heritage because it is a free activity of journalism to document a historical process that relates from an artistic form, a relevant event, to advance in terms of peace and conflict resolution.

Photography was born as a costly technical novelty only affordable, in principle, to professionals and elites. However, its handling was relatively simple, especially in comparison with artistic disciplines such as painting or drawing and their results. From the moment that photographers had a knowledge of most of the techniques and, with it, skills in the intervention of the originals, the work they did was considered more significant in the culture.

Jesús Abad Colorado, one of the most recognized Colombian photographers at the moment, will be introduced to this work, as his shots show the reality of the people who have been affected by the armed conflict in Colombia, especially by the guerrillas, the paramilitaries and the state itself. He is the man who has made photographic memory of so many facts of violence during the last years. Stories that are truly difficult to understand because of what has happened to these victims, and what most highlights this author are the exhibitions of these portraits that are exhibited free of charge.

On the other hand, there is a professional risk for the person who wants to communicate the conflict -Transmitters of a story-, the reality of a country that has been confronted and prolonged by armed groups in Colombia.

A point of view worth reviewing before analyzing cultural and communicative photography is mass art, since, throughout history, photography has enchanted the masses. Presenting a journey through culture and its relationship with photography from the 19th century to the present day.

What is called "mass art" has not existed everywhere in human history... It is the art of a particular culture. It has arisen in the context of modern, industrial mass society and has been conceived expressly for such a society, employing the productive forces characteristic of such a society to supply art to huge populations of consumers, populations that are "mass" in the sense that they cross national, class, religious, political, ethnic, racial, and sexual boundaries. (Núñez Cruz, 2017, p. 418)

Mass art emerged with urbanization and capitalist industrialization. Its strategy was and is to become an art for city consumption through global mass technologies to be digested by a large number of people. The results are the proliferation of artistic representations that can be seen everywhere at almost the same time and with the same formal structures, thanks to their mass production and distribution.

Communicative photography

Photography as a cultural and communicative document goes beyond creating an image from reality without fantasies or lies, it is the creation and the meaning given by the professionals behind the cameras. People who call photography as a taste or a cultural practice from different social sectors, or even as an artistic expression. It is

something interesting to know that these people who approach this type of art come to have the use of photography as a communicative representation and analyze how it can become a fundamental elaboration and tool for society.

For Sotelo et al.(2015) it is important to highlight photography and semiotics, as two inseparable elements that are necessary for the creation of images with linear senses. In addition, he lists five approaches that are necessary for the viewer's reading which are: photographic, perceptual, rhetorical, linguistic and semiotic approaches. All photographers should be aware of them in order to keep the reader or viewer attentive to all aspects of the image that the sender wants to express.

Photography has become one of the essential components of visually confronting the world. Qualitatively, amateur photography, this small act of everyday life is what constitutes the majority of the manufactured images circulating in this world (one billion photos per year in the late 80's), but most of them destined to a dark drawer, to be contemplated only a few seconds in the life of the one who took them. The photography of is an act and not a product. (Tabet, 2017, p. 309)

Photography is a communicative element that starts from the beginning as a tool for the communicative process, within culture it contains numerous visual messages that make it significant, for this it is important to name an author who talks about the importance of mass communication.

"With the emergence of the new techniques of mass communication, a vastly expanded market for the arts, a mass art, developed." (Mendoza Vargas, 2016, p. 208)

In addition to communicative photography, it is important to highlight photography as a cultural heritage/document. Photography is part of the cultural heritage, since it is a free activity to document a historical process that relates from an artistic form, a relevant event, to advance in terms of peace and conflict resolution.

Gisèle Freund defined photography as a means of expression of society, established on technological civilization, with the power to exactly reproduce external reality.

It can also be defined as an open document, like a literary work that opens its doors to the imagination. When contemplating the image, the receiver makes a particular reading, an analysis of which will result in uses and applications, so the readings will be as many as the looks.

From the above arguments it has also been analyzed that there is a professional risk for the person who wants to communicate the conflict through a photo, since as a photographer may have a dichotomy at the moment an image is captured -To see how those people suffer while the professional can do nothing- To this a question arises: to evolve or to die? To evolve in having a unique war photograph or to die to save someone else's life.

Photojournalism in Colombia is increasingly nurtured by new talents, who in their passion for capturing and reporting contemporary history but also dare to face all kinds of challenges in their work.

In the case of, *One Hundredth of a Second*, a short film about a war photographer, who finds herself in an inner predicament of either saving a little girl before she is killed or taking the photographs of that moment.

It is a clear example to define photography as a complex subject because of the risk of his life when trying to capture the reality of a country that is full of conflict, as in the case of Colombia, therefore, this becomes more significant.

Materials and Methods

Taking into account this research work, it is proposed to analyze photography as a cultural and communicative expression, rescuing the historical and patrimonial. After the previous analysis of the author Niépce, who in 1826 created the photographic camera representing it as a symbolic and historical construction tool, the capacity of photography as a cultural and communicative document is questioned.

The descriptive technique was used in the research design. Based on the author Zúñiga (2014) who says that:

The descriptive study uses systematic criteria to reveal the structure or behavior of the phenomena under study (p. 153).

Given that photography as cultural heritage has evolved through the photographic language (semiotics) and as a popular social practice has gained a space in museums, in addition to being considered a mass art for its current artistic panorama; that is, photography has changed through a process and with different contextual behaviors, therefore, this design is relevant for the research reaching conclusions drawn from surveys, interviews and secondary sources.

The methodology used corresponds to the quantitative method, this method is suitable for the research conducted since it is used for data collection and hypothesis testing based on numerical measurement and statistical analysis. Thus, according to Duquette(2016) "the quantitative method is the approach to investigate specific and delimited from the beginning of a study and the data collection is based on measurement and analysis in statistical procedures" (p. 100).

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In the first phase, a content analysis was established through a survey in 2019 to professionals and specialists in photography, mainly to people between 18 to 38 years old, living in Cajicá, Zipaquirá and Chía (Sabana Norte Bogotá) with the purpose of obtaining information about an image; such as color, techniques, visual language and communication. The survey modality used was a questionnaire with open and closed questions (mixed) and was done through an electronic medium (Google) where the link was shared with the respondent. It was carried out in order to obtain and elaborate data in an efficient way and with the purpose of making statistics. In this way according to Sánchez & Olivera(2014) says that the importance of the questionnaire is that the questions must have direct correspondence that aims to know or measure the objectives of the research, (P. 53). Also, it used as a method a collection of information with journalists specialized in conflict photography such as Jesús Abad Colorado who with his work has managed to highlight the reality of a country full of conflict.

The population segment used in the research is finite since it focuses especially on professionals and specialists in artistic, advertising and portrait photography, located in Sabana Norte Bogotá Colombia. The main people chosen were women and men randomly between 18 and 38 years of age with a professional university level. Of the surveys conducted, there were a total of 11 responses, we had the opportunity to analyze different answers. Such as; gender, age, level of education, type of photography, etc. The interview was conducted with a young man from Chía Cundinamarca who is a professional portrait

photographer, this interview was done in order to provide information about the meaning of photography.

Results

With the methods implemented we wanted to analyze the use of photography, if it is considered as a cultural and historical heritage, rescuing also the professionalism and the photoreporting, to this we could obtain good and complete results, one more than another, but the information is stable to develop the proposed research. Part of the objectives were fulfilled by collecting enough information through a survey and interview and determining in what symbolic way professional photographers make this type of image as an art to the culture.

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Two quantitative methods were used for this research. In the first phase a content analysis through a survey conducted in 2019 to professionals and specialists in photography, it was conducted to 11 people (9 men and 2 women) from different municipalities of Sabana Norte (Tabio, Chía and Cajicá) The people were chosen at random by sharing the link of Google Forms by WhatsApp and Instagram (Those who were interested answered it) although when looking for photographers it is identified that there are few people who exercise this artistic profession in this area of the capital of Bogota. The survey was conducted with mixed questions (closed and open) that reflected demographic questions and direct questions about photography such as: interest in photography, the reason, the type of photography they do, the feeling when capturing, the technique and the impact.

The first thing I wanted to implement was a demography of the actors in the studio, so I wanted to know how many years they have been working in this profession, as a result these photographers have been working in this illustration for between two to eight years. Through this method it was possible to analyze that each one of them has a very different interpretation when "reading" an image, they have different analytical levels, the perspective of each one of them is very important when capturing an image, their technique, their space and technical aspects.

45% of the photographers surveyed use a more corporal type of photography (portrait) where they define it as a way to make known the character they are photographing, capturing the essence of a person either by highlighting the look, the pose and transmitting his

or her state of mind. On the other hand, the essential characteristic in every portrait, regardless of time, place or circumstance, is that it represents a unique individual, and shows the subject within the conventions of his or her behavior, dress and demeanor.

It can be observed that the type of conflict photography or photoreporting is very little exercised or perhaps is not so well known by those people, that is to say, that the stories, information and activities documented through photos is little exercised and where part of Colombian history is lost.

In addition, an image was inserted for the professionals to analyze and know what kind of sensations it conveyed. Light, color, creativity, drama, passion, culture and art were some of the meanings they perceived when they saw it. It is a little complicated that they have the same or similar meaning of that image, they narrate different positions and generate different impacts, also they give great importance to the color of the photo.

Most of these people, photography is a chance of their life, that really each image can get to transmit beautiful and pleasant things, and that they achieve for others to transmit some thought or feeling. They create a recognition and it is an extended freedom for thousands of opportunities to discover, in addition each photographer shows his world as he sees it, since each one has his essence that characterizes him.

As a second phase the interview method was implemented in order to deepen aspects and details about photography, two informal interviews were conducted (not prepared), one with Jonathan Arevalo who lives in Chia Cundinamarca and has been practicing this profession for 5 years, the second is Alejandro Rueda who lives in Gachancipá and has been practicing this profession for 10 years. Men that photography is a chance of his life, that really each image can get to transmit beautiful and pleasant things, and that achieves for others to transmit some thought or feeling.

One of the words that was mentioned during the interview was photoreporting, which these photographers define as a very risky and direct type of photography, to this it is analyzed that there is a professional risk for the person who wants to communicate and capture the reality of a country in conflict through a photo. To see how these people suffer while the professional can do nothing - a question arises: evolve or die?

To evolve in having a unique war photography or to die to save the life of another person.

Also, one of the analyses that is intended is the perception of the participants of the interview on conflict photoreporting, taking into account that from their work they are in conflict-free zones, however, from their work they assume an interpretive position that they call as risky but that its meaning is valuable because it represents and transmits reality. And so, if they do not practice this type of photography, they develop others that for them their meaning is the most valuable, such as portraits, architecture and history.

Photojournalism in Colombia is nurtured every day by new talents, who in their passion for capturing and reporting contemporary history but also dare to face all kinds of challenges in their work. Analyzing also a short film called One Hundredth of a Second about a war photographer, who finds herself in an inner predicament of saving a little girl before being killed or taking the photographs of that moment. It is a clear example of defining photography as a complex subject because of the risk to her life in trying to capture the reality of a country full of conflict.

Also, historical heritage is one of the topics analyzed and highlighted through the interview, they capture this heritage that represents their people, their culture and their tradition through the photo that revives and rescues the most symbolic elements of the homeland, such as religion and tourism, and that over time may be more valuable than it is now. It also represents three fundamental values (artistic, informative and documentary). The photograph has the character of a photographic document since the shot generates a message, a document is defined as any expression in natural or conventional language, and any other graphic expression. It is not only historical, but also cultural, since the photographic object can be considered as an artistic work depending on criteria that do not always coincide and that have varied over time. Therefore, it is considered relevant to advance in terms of peace and conflict resolution.

Artistic photography, in addition to its aesthetic proposal, poses a series of existential questions. If it does not succeed, it will only be one more image, which will only be seen and forgotten. The current development and dissemination of photography has created a society accustomed to see, but not to observe and analyze the images that are around us. The art in photography is very important because it

represents what is being lived. Moreover, it has become one of the essential components to visually confront the world. Qualitatively, amateur photography, this small act of everyday life is what constitutes the majority of manufactured images circulating around the world.

Another analysis is the capacity and ability of a photographer, where at some point it was said that this activity requires the development of certain skills that one may not have at all, for example, patience, detailed observation of the environment, creativity, inventiveness, permanent search for unique images, etc.

Their work is not only published in social networks, but they also participate in contests and exhibit their photographic galleries showing the life of the people.

Highlighting and analyzing the photographer's work, which is not only about handling the camera or reflecting on the basic concepts that support his approach, but also about the image's capacity to structure the complexity of the subjective through visual metaphors. A photographer constructs ideas and, above all, elaborates approaches. In the same way that the canvas is a reflection of the imagination, a photograph is the result of the photographer's continuous and sustained analysis of his visual language.

And, finally, the ability of photography to sustain an artistic language in its own right and, above all, the ability of each photographer to create a visual idea tailored to make it unique and perhaps that is its most important and significant characteristic.

The main objective of this study was to determine in what symbolic way the professional photographers of Sabana Norte Bogota perform this type of image as a beautiful art to culture and if it is considered as cultural heritage. First, as mentioned by Brisset (2002) in recent years photography has become one of the most essential components in everyday life to visually confront the world, especially in photojournalism that plays an important role in Colombian history that allows society to approach reality and think.

Taking into account the results of the research, photojournalism has experienced complicated moments throughout its history, this profession has encountered more difficulties than ever and its professionals have had to adapt to the changes or others do not continue to practice it for fear of losing their lives when doing war photography. However, society's need to consume visual information

has increased significantly and, likewise, the amount of visual information published on social networks or in newspapers has increased. This fact leads to the fact that journalistic photographs do not have such a professional circle in some occasions.

From this research it is worth highlighting the importance of photography within the cultural and historical heritage, since it represents the heritage of a people and a tradition. It can also be defined as an open document, like a literary work that opens its doors to the imagination. When contemplating the image, the receiver makes a particular reading, an analysis from which uses and applications will result, so the readings will be as many as the looks. For this Gisèle Freund defined photography as a means of expression of society, established on technological civilization, with the power to reproduce exactly the external reality.

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Also, as an essential result was the empirical photography that has been considered as a copy of the superior reality of ideas, it drives the sense of experimentation and curiosity before concepts totally new to the intellect. The professionals and/or amateurs of photography do not cease to be an important element day after day. Each type of training provides us with unique knowledge and experiences that benefit us greatly regardless of their positive and negative aspects.

On the other hand, empirical training plays an important role in creating their own visual criteria influenced by aspirations and creativity, having aspects that differentiate them from other specialties, some of which are susceptible to subjectivity and others more general.

Conclusions

Photography is a field that has so many very significant approaches, in this document has been treated photography as a classic value, the most apparently real and mostly recognized by a tradition of photographic art, has been the most important documentary value in recent years and exposes to the view of all as a reality as truthful showing as a product of a culture and the particular look of the photographer, focusing on the value of photography as a way to approach cultural, historical and heritage contexts, either in the past or present.

Documentary photography has been a worldwide trend, since it allows us to approach identity (of people, races, peoples, culture, politics,

economic level, inequalities, etc.) through the personal narratives of documentary photographers. In addition, the historical and cultural heritage of the photographic object can be considered as an artistic work, a historical document or both, depending on criteria that do not always coincide and that have varied over time. Therefore, this is considered relevant to advance in terms of peace and conflict resolution.

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