UNFINISHED BUSINESS | Lewis Hine's Mine Photographs and Some Questions about Documentary Photography

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As we began preparing this exhibition together and were considering problems of invisibility, absence, and the ghostly, our discussions always circled back to the same questions: How do we describe the ghostly? How can we contain something in language that is only latently present? And how do we establish contact with it – do we seek it out or does it come to us unexpectedly? Is there a relationship between the ghostly and something present but not necessarily visible? What part do we play as visual artists who produce images and collect information? How can we move between what we make visible and what remains concealed? As soon as we thought we were becoming more concrete, getting closer to a clear articulation, we'd begin to stammer – the subject eluded us, then disappeared. We realized that "speaking with" had to take the place of "speaking about." We had to find ways to communicate with something which was present but not active, not visible, and almost impossible to put into words.

My own interests closed in on instances of the uncanny, moments in which things surface in such a way that they break through our perception of space and time. Photography is often the medium that establishes contact, manages the interruption of a here and now and offers a glimpse of a presence that might not otherwise be perceptible. Photography's hold on the uncanny is its ability to freeze an instant, pack it in a medium and convey it through time and space. It has the dual aspect of representing something real, of being an imprint of reality, while at the same time standing very distant from it. It stands still, freezes something, renders currents and facial expressions fixed. Through photography it seems possible to come into contact with something – something that when re-presented in the here and now can unleash activity and speak to us.

A literal translation of *unheimlich*, the German word for uncanny, reads "not of the home." It further underscores this question of transit. Why do some images travel across time when others remain rooted and mute? Is it the photographer who teaches an image to speak by speaking with it himself? To what extent is it the frame that makes space for the enunciation? Or is it a medium whose very nature is to travel and multiply and as such can never really be at home? An understanding of documentary photography hinges on these questions – in terms of the existing archive as well as the production of new work.

My attention turned to the work of Lewis Hine (1874–1940). As an example of a practitioner of early documentary photography, Hine was directly engaged in the political discourses of his time and was also conscious of the medium's aesthetic value. Hine was always keenly aware of how his work was read and was very engaged in its organization and presentation. Today, his photographs are filed in numerous archives so that the context and interpretation of the pictures and photographic series are constantly shifting. This is especially true of the work he did documenting the conditions of child labor throughout the United States.

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In Butler, Pennsylvania, not far from where Hine captured some of his most resonant child labor images, is one of the largest underground archives in the world today. In the depths of a former limestone mine reside many images by Hine, including some from the child labor series. Once a site of manual labor and industrial production, today a storehouse for our culture's artifacts, the mine is my point of departure in an attempt to know better the ghosts we've inherited.

Lewis Hine and his work for the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC) in the United States constitute an extraordinary document of an era in which ideas about enlightenment were tied to the praxis of photography. The NCLC was founded by progressive citizens and politicians in 1904 to launch a public campaign against child labor practices. Although laws prohibiting child labor had existed in many states since as early as 1830, the situation in 1900 had hardly changed. It was common in mines, textile mills, factories, and agriculture that menial tasks, or those that required greater dexterity and small hands, were filled by children. The self-proclaimed mission of the NCLC was to raise public awareness about the children's situations and through this awareness to pressure the state into enforcing or tightening the laws.

Hine was trained as an educator and first developed an interest in photography as an educational tool while teaching at the Ethical Culture School in New York. In 1907, having decided on a career in sociological photography, he began graduate studies in sociology. That same year he received his first major commission from the Pittsburgh Survey and shortly thereafter began work with the NCLC. For the next several years, on salary with the NCLC, he traveled extensively documenting the conditions and circumstances under which children were working. Usually under cover, he snuck into worksites, disguised as a salesman, and visited during lunch breaks or in the evening. His assignment was not limited to photographing the children – the committee also needed information about the child laborers, the kinds of work they performed, and the ways work was executed. Hine photographed and accumulated data, produced individual images and put together collections, designed exhibitions, and worked on diagrams and collages. The facts and photographs he collected bolstered important arguments in the battles waged by the reform movement. He was incessantly involved, assembling facts and photographs, organizing exhibitions, and discussing his work with the members of the NCLC.

In January 1911, on assignment for the NCLC, Hine photographed a mine in Pittston, Pennsylvania. The pictures that he made there over the course of two days focus on a boy named Angelo Ross. There are several images of Ross. Hine first photographed him among a larger group of boys working in the coal breaker, then as part of a smaller group, then another yet smaller group, and then twice alone – a full-body portrait and a portrait. In the picture taken in the breaker it is dark. Almost 50 boys peer into the camera, their individual faces barely discernible. In the second photograph there are fewer boys. The picture was taken outside and the soot-smeared faces emerge as individuals – Angelo Ross stares grimly and perhaps also somewhat skeptically at the photographer. His cap is pulled low over his brow and his face is very dirty.

The photographs on the following pages, page 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15 and 17 are downloads from the website of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., from a series of 100 prints by Lewis Wickes Hine entitled „Coal mines. Child labor at coal and zinc mines in the United States."

The boy either washed up for the portraits or Hine made them the next day before work. He is also wearing a different sweater and a different jacket, his expression is more open, his brow is relaxed. He stands alone in a large, empty lot and looks directly into the camera. In the distant background there are industrial buildings, probably part of the mine, perhaps workers' housing or management offices.

The pictures were not presented as a series — every publication used a different arrangement or simply individual images. But the series reveals how Hine worked, how he approached the children, and even suggests how much time he needed to make such an exchange possible. Looking at the pictures it is not apparent that he made them without permission. One senses nothing of how difficult it must have been for Hine to be in those locations and nothing of the danger he faced if caught. The strength of the images comes from Hine's intimate connection with his young subjects, who appear calm and tend to look directly at the camera. They seem to trust him. They form a group, a circle of peers, in communication with the photographer. He uses the gaze to foster communication between the observer and the children. He grants the observer access to an experience and strives to develop a visual language that enlists a participatory seeing. The presentation seeks out a voice in the imagination of the observer, a voice in dialog. Not something factual out there, but rather visual facts, through images of others, that awaken a consciousness and empathy within the observer.

This was during a time when the perception of social work in the United States was changing.[1] Moving away from nineteenth-century notions of charity, the reform community initiated new systems based on political work and education. Drawing on established notions of scientific enlightenment, these systems developed into what we know as the scientific objectification of social data. Particularly in the work that Paul Kellogg organized for the Pittsburgh Survey[2] between 1907 and 1908 with Hine as the main photographer, methods were developed for the scientific investigation of social problems in which photography served as factual proof of collected data. Hine believed that facts alone could not convey the entire story, that facts alone don't make a story out of details, and that the distribution of facts is not enough to prompt a social act. He possessed a special relationship to the people he photographed and wanted the observer to take part in his experience. In the early twentieth century, with the advent of a social science whose goal it was to objectify social reality, Hine firmly maintained that alongside this objectification and abstraction of data was the necessity for direct contact with the photographic subject. He insisted that within the idea and the praxis of enlightenment there remained something that was not expressed through objectification and factuality, and that something was not to be forgotten.

There has been much debate over the efficacy of documentary photography. Martha Rosler's critique of humanitarian photography is one the most severe to be leveled by a photographer: "As this early history [of American social documentary photography] suggests, documentary engages with structural injustices, often to provoke active responses. Much of its appeal stems from what might be called the physiognomic fallacy: the identification of the image of a face with character, a body centered essentialism."[3] In other places,

1 For more about changes in the understanding of social work see: Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Matthew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989) and Maren Stange, *Symbols of Ideal Life: Social Documentary Photography in America, 1890-1950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

2 The Pittsburgh Survey (1907–08) was a sociological study of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania initiated by the Sage Foundation in New York. It is one of the earliest and most exact descriptions of urban living conditions in the United States. Over seventy people worked on it. The director of the study, Paul Kellogg, attempted to connect reform principles with scientific, sociological investigation. Hine was the main photographer for the survey. For more on the subject see Maren Stange, *Symbols of Ideal Life* (note 1).

3 Martha Rosler, "Post-Documentary, Post-Photography," in *decoys + disruptions* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), p. 221.

she writes that photography has never been revolutionary. She argues that "documentary photography has been much more comfortable in the company of moralism than wedded to a rhetoric or program of revolutionary politics."[4] But something remains: In the photographs of Ross, we witness the evolution of a relationship. Slowly, from picture to picture, over two days' time, a young boy whom we initially don't recognize becomes Angelo Ross. His gaze does not beg for help. In opposition to the pointed criticism of Martha Rosler and others who would dismiss the reform-oriented context of the pictures, stands a boy whose expression does not call for social consciousness but rather for a dialog of sociality. For me, the image is not a simplified provocation to identify with the "other" as victim; instead it allows something to shine through. Something that is not there to be re-presented, but is present in its absence.

In 1982, Rosalind Krauss published an essay titled "Photography's Discursive Spaces" in which she examines the problem of the photographic archive and "aesthetically derived categories" in relation to nineteenth-century photography, particularly in the work of Timothy O'Sullivan and Eugène Atget.[5] Reading pairs of images by each photographer, she demonstrates how within the space of the museum, aesthetic categories like authorship and genre are privileged – obscuring, among other things, the conditions of production and the photographers' actual motivations.[6]

While Krauss' critique focuses primarily on the museum and the archive, similar problems arise with the implementation of digital technology. It is most evident within individual archives themselves, as they are literally re-ordered and re-categorized for digital storage and circulation. Since the 1990s, when analog picture archives began transitioning to digital databanks, the sorting and accessibility of images has been turned upside down. Images were newly sorted and classified.

The search engines which are designed to locate a specific image vary – one can search by photographer, location, search word, series, date or producer. Stock agencies tend to use search engines that rely on keywords which treat all images according to the same search criteria regardless of their original context. They break down collections into individual images, changing the approach and access to images and thereby altering their legibility. Information about production, sequels, series, and titles is included only in the rarest instances. A particularly extreme example of this re-writing is the picture stock of Corbis, which has expanded very rapidly, ingesting countless historical archives into the categories of its search engines. This bulk organization of images according to a verbal logic produces a complete fact machine – a machine that can take in all the images and streamline them according to a single logic. It suggests that all the images in the world stand always and everywhere at our service, ready for us to consume.[7]

An examination of the archives containing Hine's Pennsylvania photographs for the NCLC reveals significant differences in the handling and sorting of image collections.[8] Practices range from presentation of an isolated picture to attempts to convey the historical context and background of a given image.

4 The entire quote reads: "Documentary photography has been much more comfortable in the company of moralism than wedded to a rhetoric or program of revolutionary politics ... Yet the force of documentary surely derives in part from the fact that the images might be more decisively unsettling than the arguments enveloping them. Arguments for reform – threatening to the social order as they might seem to the unconvinced – must have come as a relief from the potential arguments embedded in the images: With the manifold possibilities for radical demands that photos of poverty and degradation suggest, any coherent argument for reform is ultimately both polite and negotiable. Odious, perhaps, but manageable; it is, after all, social discourse. As such, these arguments were surrounded and institutionalized into the very structures of government; the newly created institutions, however, began to prove their inadequacy – even to their own limited purpose – almost as soon as they were erected." Martha Rosler, "In, Around, and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography)," originally appeared in *Martha Rosler: 3 Works* (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1981). Reprinted in Richard Bolton, ed., *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989).

5 Rosalind Krauss, "Photography's Discursive Spaces," *Art Journal* 42 (Winter 1982).

6 Krauss describes two reproductions by Timothy O'Sullivan from the same negative of Tufa Domes, Pyramid Lake, Nevada. One is a photographic print from 1868, the other a lithograph from 1878 which was produced for Systematic Geology, a publication of the engineering department of the US Army. Pointing to the reproductions which emphasize different elements in the image, she shows that they operate in two different discursive spaces, whereby the first is more easily conferred as art.

7 Avery Gordon describes this phenomenon with the term "hypervisibility": "Hypervisibility is a kind of obscenity of accuracy that abolishes the distinction between permission and prohibition, presence and absence." No shadows, no ghosts. In a culture seemingly ruled by technologies of hypervisibility, we are led to believe not only that everything can be seen, but also that everything is available and accessible for our consumption. In a culture seemingly ruled by technologies of hypervisibility, we are led to believe that neither repression nor the return of the repressed, in the form of either improperly buried bodies or countervailing systems of value or difference, occurs with any meaningful result." Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 16.

8 The Index to American Photographic Collections lists more than 120 institutions that have reported holdings of Lewis Hine materials.

Hine's images were made in 1911 and are legally considered press photography. According to today's international laws, they are protected by copyright for fifty years from the date of first publication. After the copyright expires on an image, it becomes public domain – anyone can use Hine's images at this point, even for commercial purposes. The images that were originally filed in the NCLC[9] archive can be called up in numerous public and commercial picture archives today – copies have multiplied and surface in many locations.

Among the public archives that hold the most comprehensive collections of Hine's images are the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.,[10] the National Archives in Maryland,[11] and the Albin O. Kuhn Library at the University of Maryland.[12] While the National Archives organize the collection according to Hine's original system in its library catalog, and the Library of Congress provides high resolution files online, the University of Maryland is the only library to present Hine's original working methods in digital format. They sort their online catalog according to the locations that he visited and order the images with consecutive numbers and search words. It is the only archive that presents both sides of the photographs, revealing Hine's practice of captioning his work.

9 Today, the NCLC still exists and is engaged in improving the condition of children in the United States. They still hold some negatives of Hine's photographs, but they sold the original prints in the 1970s. For more about the NCLC today, see http://www.kapow.org/nclc.htm.

10 The Library of Congress offers the most complex search engine of any picture archive that makes its collection accessible online. It is one of the rare examples of a search engine without a tree structure. For more, see http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/catalog.html. The Hine collection at the Library of Congress consists of more than 5,100 photographic prints and 355 glass negatives, given to the Library of Congress, along with the NCLC records, in 1954 by Mrs. Gertrude Folks Zimand, acting for the NCLC in her capacity as chief executive, in celebration of the NCLC's fiftieth anniversary. The NCLC delivered the collection to the Library of Congress in albums organized by type of industry and, within that, by Hine numbers. The NCLC apparently also offered the Library of Congress a file of nitrate negatives, which the Library did not accept. Some original negatives can be found at the University of Maryland and the International Museum of Photography and Film at the George Eastman House. In 1968, Library staff remounted the photographs in new albums and subsequently microfilmed the collection. The entire collection was digitized in 2003.

11 The National Archives in Maryland are a branch office of the US government archives (NARA). They hold documents and materials which have been created in the course of business conducted by the US federal government. NARA received Hine's images automatically from the Department of Commerce, which incorporated the NCLC in 1907. For more, see http://www.archives.gov.

12 The Albin O. Kuhn Library at the University of Maryland acquired their Hine photos in 1975, when they supposedly bought 5400 prints and negatives from the NCLC. For more, see http://www.umbc.edu/aok/main/index.html.

A search for “Hine” in Getty Images[13] returns an image from the Massachusetts Labor Committee that exemplifies a layout technique that Hine sometimes employed. In a call to arms, the group portrait of children was inset in a collage that solicited the reader to “support the labor movement.” Here the image is an illustration, inserted as factual evidence, receding behind the clear, political summons. It is the only image I have found in an online database that includes the elements of collage that were originally used. Added to the montage is a Getty watermark that cuts across the image and only disappears after one pays the calculated usage fee.

A search in Corbis[14] returns an image embedded in a data sheet outlining rights and usage fees. There is no trace of the original reform context to frame a clear reading of the photographs, only a Corbis watermark.

The shifting legibility of an image through different discursive spaces, as described by Krauss, also occurs in the re-writing of digitized databanks. But there is more here than questions about historically correct interpretation. Looking at Hine’s images in the different databanks, something happens that points beyond the system of classification. The children staring us in the eye speak in the here and now, very directly. We know nothing of what became of them and we have no information as to whether the photography changed anything in their lives. We know just a few names and we can only speculate as to their occupations later in life. What we know for sure is that none of those children are still living today.

13 Getty Images is a commercial stock agency founded by Paul Getty in the 1990’s. For more, see www.gettyimages.com.

14 Corbis is a commercial stock agency founded by Bill Gates in the 1990s. Originally based on the idea to create a virtual museum, Corbis started its business by buying the digital picture rights of art pieces from many museums worldwide. Today, its main business relies on advertisement photography and picture stocks. With the Bettman Collection, Corbis has bought an important historical press archive. Corbis and Getty Images are the two largest image banks in the world today. Over the past ten years both have been acquiring other agencies and archives in aggressive competition with each other’s stock. For more, see www.corbis.com.

But wait. I must return to something that was passed over too quickly. The photographs of breaker boys that we can call up in commercial search engines involve many parties – the boys who were photographed, the photographer, the original commission, and a commercial stock agency. Who has authority over these images – who possesses the moral right and who the material right? Who determines the context in which they appear, who works on their interpretation and who earns money from them?

"Does an image that depicts something belonging to everyone belong to all?"[15] The French court of law grappled with this same question in the mid-nineteenth century and over the course of the proceedings issued a resounding no. They ruled that photography is the singular expression of an individual and not a mere copy of reality. The decision altered the status of photography and laid the foundation for the emergence of the picture industry. It defined photography as the property of the creator. Under the economic pressures of the photo industry which quickly became a critical sector of capitalist production, the soulless machine was transformed into an instrument that could assist in the creative expression of a subject.[16] The question as to whether a photograph represented more than reality was answered almost immediately by the industry, enabling the far-reaching expansion of a market.

Debates continue today surrounding rights within and around photography. The arguments date back to a confrontation between two legal systems: author rights, which originated in France, and copyright, which emerged in England. Debates turn on the question of who owns the primary rights to a production: Is it an author/photographer or a publisher/producer? Negotiations continue toward an international standard that would stand somewhere between the two systems.[17] But at the same time, the image market is developing practices and standards that sometimes disregard copyright entirely, setting up a parallel set of precedents. With the massive production of images and their numerous producers, questions about distribution and disbursement or whether to participate in the market at all have become increasingly pressing. Individual, independent producers face difficulties surviving in the expanded market. Huge agencies and stock archives take over small production companies and dictate terms to the photographers. That the rights accompanying images expire in fifty or seventy years plays to the advantage of the producers and distributors more often than to the photographers. Long-term economic gains go to the photographer only in the rarest cases.

Most copyright debates revolve around image rights and economic profit pertaining to an individual image. But a photograph is never an isolated unit in terms of meaning. There is a great deal of controversy surrounding what the legal system calls "moral rights" which relate to how and where an image is utilized and with what intentions[18] – for example, the use of a historical photograph to advertise a product.[19] This reaches beyond the legal question of "material expression" of an idea, which would be the photograph itself, to larger questions about appropriation and connotation. Moral rights always return to a consideration of meaning, interpretation and intention. Allan Sekula describes this convergent nature of the medium: "Photographic meaning is always hybrid construction, the outcome of an interplay of iconic, graphic, and narrative conventions ... The photograph is invariably accompanied by,

15 The question is quickly complicated in situations in which an image depicts things that are not common property. Today we find ourselves in intricate negotiations about the personal rights of someone who appears in a photograph, who materially owns something that is depicted, or who has intellectual rights to something depicted.

16 See John Tagg, "The Photograph as Property in Law," in: *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

17 See, for example, TRIPS (Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) (1994). TRIPS is an international treaty administered by the World Trade Organization (WTO) which sets down minimum standards for most forms of regulation within all WTO member countries. See also WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization) and particularly the WIPO treaty (1996).

18 A contemporary example of a breach of moral copyright is the case of the film "The Raspberry Reich" by Bruce LaBruce. It was banned as of August 23, 2006 by a ruling of the higher courts in Paris. Additionally, the producer of the film, Jürgen Brüning, faces fines for breach of copyright and brand infringement. Patrick Magaud and Diana Evangelina Dia Lopez – the daughter of the photographer, Alberto Korda – filed the suit. Korda, who died in 2001, made the famous portrait of Che Guevara that was used on the poster promoting "The Raspberry Reich"; I.c. addition to the poster, Korda's estate objected to scenes within the movie.

19 Korda himself had instigated a legal fight with a vodka company using his Che Guevara picture earlier.

and situated within, an overt or covert text. Even at the level of the artificially 'isolated' image, photographic signification is exercised in terms of pictorial conventions that are never 'purely' photographic."[20]

Hine's photographs are documents of an attempt to supply the reform movement with more than mere facts. He tried to approach something that was not easily articulated or even comprehended. What reaches us through the children's gaze is the experience of a merciless moment in our history. The gaze from within a photograph bridges the temporal distance, insisting on an uncanny acceptance of the fact that we cannot separate ourselves from this moment. It is remarkable from today's perspective that the presentation of the photographs – whether determined by Hine, the NCLC, the Massachusetts Labor Committee or within internet pages like those of Corbis or the Library of Congress – that have the most startling and direct effect are those which do not also include the original framework of the reform movement. The summonses, classifications, and slogans from the past speak too clearly about a specific moment. Ironically, it might be the Corbis pages, entirely ahistorical and de-contextualized, that provide the framework that best activates the images.

The questioning of interpretive control over one's pictures is ongoing and is central to debates within contemporary photography. Outlining her own position in an article published in 1991, Abigail Solomon-Godeau writes that the renewal of documentary photography is not predicated only on "a full awareness of the role played by context, subject/object relations, and the various structuring mechanisms that determine photographic meaning"; rethinking documentary in a rigorous and serious way also "includes an insistence on maintaining control over the work in terms of exhibition, publication, or distribution."[21]

Martha Rosler and Allan Sekula have been working with questions of meaning and interpretation around photography since the 70s. Both take up Hine's work in their texts and refer to the history of documentary photography in developing their own ideas about a "radical documentary praxis." In their projects they attempt to rework the question of the documentary. Sekula does it through a careful orchestration of space in and around his photo series. Images don't stand alone and text is often an element that surrounds the series. He takes control not only of the individual images but also of the framing and thereby the entire installation. In 1975–76, Martha Rosler issued a critique of social documentary photography in conjunction with her refusal to photograph poverty and suffering. This led to her work "The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems" – an image-text collage about the Bowery in lower Manhattan and its castoff population. In it she combines black and white photographs of building entrances and traces of destitute Bowery street life with words associated with drunkenness – dead soldiers, bloom nose, boozer, derelict, muddled, flooey, maudlin. The work stems from a point in the development of her artistic praxis when she was investigating new forms and practices of representation. This search yielded not only the image-text collage but also related texts. In her later work, Rosler seldom engages this discourse so explicitly. It is difficult to trace her ideas about representation without her now classic text "In Around and Afterthoughts," in which she outlined her approach

20 Allan Sekula, The Traffic in Photographs, in Benjamin H.D. Buchloh et. al., eds., *Modernism and Modernity: The Vancouver Conference Papers* (Halifax, Nova Scotia, The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983).

21 Abigail Solomon Godeau, "Who is Speaking Thus? Some Questions about Documentary Photography," in Abigail Solomon Godeau, *Photography at the Dock: Essays on Photographic History, Institutions, and Practices* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1991), pp. 169-183.

to the Bowery project. In more recent work, the photographs are set in rows or stacked one behind another and are almost illegible without prior knowledge of her theoretical positions.[22] The text is extracted from the process and becomes part of the catalogs and lectures tied to the work's presentation. Work about the sphere of photographic production rarely occurs within photography itself.

Questions of interpretation were always important to Hine — they were an integral part of his process and intentions. I find it interesting that although much of his conscious framing did not hold up, something in the images still speaks across the incidental frames in which they've landed. An examination of Hine's photographs as they are presented in different archives proves not only how strongly influenced they are by their framing, but that they also possess a store of activity with the potential to influence their context. Looking out from the center of the Corbis web-page listing image sizes, usage fees, and copyright, a group of children stares us directly in the eye. An image depicting children for sale amidst a sales sheet from Corbis elicits an uneasy feeling. Would they have been happy to appear on this page? What role does the photographer play as mediator between them and us, between the NCLC and the stock agency? Emerging from the logic of the bulk administration of images, through sheer coincidence, is a glimmer of photography's uncanny capacity to travel through time and space. It is not so much about the control or truth value of an image, but about a potential activation of images that must be carried out over and over again. It is not about deciphering Angelo Ross's true story or determining which interpretation is correct, but rather which tools serve us in activating that which still involves us today. In every conscientious photography project there is a remainder, an in-between space that cannot be explained, like a shadow, offering something from beyond and speaking without words.

22 See, for example, *Martha Rosler: passionate signals* (exhibition catalog, Hatje Cantz/Sprengel Museum Hannover, 2005).

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Youthful Mining Crew

Grimy young men and boys pause in their work at the Pennsylvania Coal Company's mine in South Pittston. Many of these boys are no more than ten years old, and some are even younger.

Bild: © CORBIS

Fotograf:	Lewis Wickes Hine
Fotografiert am:	January 1911
Ortsinformationen:	Pennsylvania Coal Company mine, South Pittston, Pennsylvania, USA

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Ultrahoch	2602px x 3696px	8in. x 12in.	300 ppi	9 MB	Sofort

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Sometimes it is as if traveling images achieve a spatial fluidity in which the place itself, its local terms and conditions are transported into another dimension—the images link up to new contexts and frozen subjectivities are liberated. Sometimes it is as if places themselves are liberated from categories of knowledge, unmooring assumptions so that meaning can move across a range of connections, descriptions and networks.

Sometimes a place is reunited with traveling images – the interconnections invite the temporal, reincarnating previous relationships. Hine's images for the NCLC lead us to an underground archive that Corbis uses in northwestern Pennsylvania.[23] The archive is not far from Pittston where Hine photographed the breaker boys in 1911. The location was first mined for limestone about a hundred years ago – a remnant of the hard, manual labor that shaped Pennsylvania during the industrial period. Today the cool, dry mine shafts house one of the largest underground archives in the world and more people work there today than did then. There are almost three hundred miles of potential archive space, thirty of which are now in operation, occupied by various firms and institutions. Its contents include the government archives of the Department of Defense and a storage space for the Social Security data of all US citizens as well as the data, films, and documents of many commercial institutions like Disney and MGM. Through the holdings of the Corbis archive, it is also home to Angelo Ross. Regarding questions of production today, this location is as relevant for me as the images themselves.

To travel to Pennsylvania almost one hundred years later with Hine's photographs and to search out the places they were made is like traveling though time, although there is little to see of the landscape's previous history – it has outlived its material traces. But on returning to their initial site of production, Hine's photographs enter into conversation with this absence in the landscape.

A landscape and a face...
In *A Thousand Plateaus*, in a section called "Year Zero: Faciality," Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari describe the face as an "abstract machine" of white walls and black holes. "Signification is never without a white wall upon which it inscribes its signs and redundancies. Subjectification is never without a black hole in which it lodges its consciousness, passion and redundancies."[24] A machine of normality, always classifying aberrations and cataloging them in its gridding. It is constantly at work, comparing and ordering faces according to the norm in ever expanding and contracting categories. Racism, for example, begins the moment something is given a face. It is not a problem of identifying something as "other," but rather a constant assessment of the degree of aberration from the norm-face – the face of a white, European man. Depending on this evaluation, one accepts him or her in his or her "ghetto" or wipes them from the wall. The abstract machine of faces produces norm-faces, limit-faces and those that fall through the gridding. Hine's pictures of Angelo Ross are photographs of limit-faces. Individuals on the margins of society, invisible to most, to whom Hine gives a face. Through the campaign of the NCLC, he tried to secure a level of public identification with the children. If an observer could identify with the children, could see that they were almost like him, then the observer could be urged to act.

23 Due to the large number of requests for Hine's work and the relation of the NCLC to several federal government institutions, the Committee made the images and series available through several public archives including the Albin O. Kuhn Library, the Library of Congress in Washington, and the NARA Archives in Maryland, among others. Because most public libraries offer the images for the cost of reproduction and make no differentiation between private or commercial usage, many of the images have found their way into commercial archives. The commercial archives retrieve them from the public sources and sell them. Many of them, like Corbis and Getty Images, implement a watermark, copyrighting the scan they made.

24 Gilles Deleuze and Feliz Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, tr. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 167.

In Deleuze and Guattari's description of the abstract machine, faces do not function individually. They exist because there must be a face – in the close-up in movies, in the face of the leader in politics, but also in painting, in architecture, in literature. They exist because specific arrangements of power have the desire to produce a face. What counts is not the individuality of faces, but rather the potency of encryption that it enables in some instances. In Hine's breaker series in Pittston there is only one image that renounces the face in its portrayal and formal treatment. It is the image of the boys in a breaker – probably one of the first pictures that Hine made and the only one in the series that abandons the frontal view. The dynamic space of the breaker becomes more important than the portrayal of a person and the exchange of gazes. It is the only depiction of the children working and the only view from behind. All other images in the series arrange the children frontally and they look directly in the camera. This series has the effect of a camera-tracking that moves in on a single image to culminate in a close-up.

And a landscape is like a face...
For Deleuze and Guattari the face is like a landscape – both are pervaded by the same logic of the white wall and the black holes. There is an alternating relationship of exchange between them and in both the machine of significance and subjectification is at work. Considering photographs by Timothy O'Sullivan, Krauss describes the change in relation between nature and the observer.[25] Pointing to evolving modes of perception and categorizations of subjectivity, she traces the shift from "view" to "landscape" as a description of O'Sullivan's work. In his own notes O'Sullivan always used the term "view" – implying that he was an observer of a natural phenomenon and not the author of a picture. The view offered itself and he secured it. As the work was ushered into the museum, a space that requires an author, it became increasingly more common to see the term landscape applied. The notion of landscape emerges as the observer becomes an author. Nature becomes a terrain for processes of construction and subjectification and, ultimately, the humanization of the natural world.

A landscape is like a face...[26]
How can one elude this abstract machine that is now at work in the landscape as well? Is it possible to become faceless? For Deleuze and Guattari there is no turning back, no possibility of reinventing oneself without a face. The only possibility is to create the face and the landscape anew and to find, in terms of an instrument, another utilization for them. Perhaps there is an opening in the landscape today to do exactly that. Former categories of observation no longer function, there is a dissolution in the process and the terms we have applied to them no longer fit. Former industrial areas become vast leftover places. Efforts to restructure them through development, re-naturalization or re-utilization are extensive, but the effects are nominal. They can be understood as an attempt to reinscribe the landscape, drawing it a new face. Post-industrial landscapes have fallen outside the gridding and become ghostly terrain. How we address them today and in the future is also a question of consorting with the abstract machine. Perhaps the ghost itself has already offered us instruction – the only way to contact them is to speak with them.

25 Rosalind Krauss, "Photography's Discursive Spaces," *Art Journal* 42 (Winter 1982).

26 The sentence "A landscape is like a face" appears like a red flag throughout Godard's film "Two or Three Things I Know About Her" (1967). It marks moments when Juliette, the main character, reflects about her relation to the world. It always appears when she conducts an inner monologue searching for her ties to the world. In the film it appears as a description of the search for a congruence, for a "being one with the world", which mostly fails.

The photographs on the following pages are from the series „Picture Mining" by Ines Schaber, photographed in 2005 around Boyers in western Pennsylvania, above the former limestone mine in which Corbis now keeps its underground archive.

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