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Lecture performance for Radical Media Forum event 28 Feb 2014

Writing the image : reading Allan Sekula

The text element of Allan Sekula's photo-text piece *Meditations on a Triptych* (1973-78) is an exploration of three family photographs; an exploration that involves repeatedly travelling far outside the immediate territories of the image, and then returning. It is a lengthy piece of observation, recollection, speculation and contemplation, about such things as marriage, patriarchy, family, place, tradition, religion, class, colour theory — and photography itself.

Sekula makes clear his rationale: he writes of the first image, 'Years later, the photo reappears in an almost archeological light. What meanings were once constructed here? What ideas and desires directed this project? Who spoke, who listened, who spoke with a voice not their own? I want to give what was once familiar an exemplary strangeness.'

In this lecture performance, the *images* are presented as 'writerly' texts, where 'the reader is no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text.' — Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (1970). And here, Sekula's *text* is but a timekeeper; a placeholder for the act of looking; an occasional calling back.

It is a text that I have both read and written (re-typed). Now, I read, you write.