Forever Young : the reproduction of photographic artworks as a conservation strategy

Marchesi, M.

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Reproduction as an act of reduction

This chapter outlines a theoretical framework to the main question of the dissertation. Is reproduction a conservation strategy for photographic artworks? This inquiry arises from the daily practice of a conservator, working in a contemporary art museum, where questions about the reproducibility of photographic materials are regularly posed. In this chapter, the practice-based research of conservators is related to the theoretical context elaborated by the French literary theorist Gérard Genette in his book *L'Oeuvre de l' art. Immanence et transcendance* (1994), in which he reflected on the status and the function of works of art.

Genette's text is a dense one, sometimes even difficult and it certainly demands an attentive reader due to the many classifications the author makes and the ambiguous terms he uses. Genette is an author who examines the details of artistic traditions, who looks into the rules as well as the exceptions, someone who does not try to condense art in 'easy' dichotomies. Nevertheless, Genette's theoretical framework is of great help to this chapter and to the entire dissertation, because it examines reproducible art forms such as printmaking, cast sculpture, and photography. It allows for the existence of multiple artworks and, by doing so, it moves away from the rigid distinction between 'original' and 'copy', where original is regarded as the first, authentic manifestation of the artwork, while copy is something that comes after and that is generally considered of less value, either from an artistic or monetary perspective. Hence, Genette's theory offers other options for those artworks that do not easily fit into those two categories by providing a detailed taxonomy, taking into account more complex artistic practices than a unique, well-defined artwork made by one recognized artist.

In this research, it will be argued that a photographic artwork 's reproduction, intended as an exact replication at image level as well as at a material level, cannot be achieved. However, it should be noted that the term 'reproduction' has several meanings in photography and it might describe different practices that are often intermingled. Photography is a 'reproduction medium' and this denotes the capacity of photography to capture with great accuracy the visual characteristics of objects, people, and places. In his book *The Pencil of Nature* (1844), photography's inventor and pioneer Henry William Fox Talbot (1800–1877) praised the ability of photography to copy and reproduce artefacts and landscape, truthfully and without human intervention.[53] With the invention of the negative, photography has also become a 'reproducible medium' as it is possible to produce multiple positive prints from one single negative.[54] Some of photography's greatest achievements include the capacity to convey information, to record with precision the physical world, and to multiply it in countless images. Photographs were and are used in a myriad of ways: as illustrations for journals and books, family pictures, souvenirs of distant places, reproductions of works of art, and advertisements for merchandise, to mention just a few uses.

According to photograph theorist Barbara Savedoff, the documentary value of photographs has shaped the way society interacts with images. Photographs are regularly changed and manipulated as they may be downsized, cropped, enlarged, photocopied, scanned, or even enhanced. These manipulations have a long-lasting influence on the way people have approached and still consider photography. Even when photographs are taken seriously as an art form, most people still neglect the importance of properties such as scale, tone, surface, or other material and visual features (Savedoff 2000, 177). The deep-rooted expectation that photographs are reproducible might explain why the creating artists of the works under study and the museum staff took the decision to reproduce the works and regarded these new works as identical enough to be substitutions for the originals. As will be argued in this chapter, the belief that multiple photographic prints produced by the same negative are interchangeable is mostly based on a convention and it is the result of an 'act of reduction', as changes in material, technique and even image can be regularly overlooked.

Here, convention is intended as an implicit recurrent practice or as an opinion based upon general consent, which is accepted by society at large. Conventions can be viewed as:

> Understandings, often tacit but also conscious, that organize and coordinate action in predictable ways. […] Although used by individuals, […] conventions do not reside in, and are not reducible to, individuals (Woolsey Biggart and Beamish 2003, 444).[55]

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[53] In several passages of his book, Fox Talbot drew attention to the capacity of photography to copy and to multiply the depicted image. For example, he claimed that the photographic art was able to produce facsimiles from original sketches of old master drawings and thus these facsimiles could be "multiplied to any extent plate" (Fox Talbot 1844). Fox Talbot's book can be retrieved online at http://www.thepencilofnature.com; for the specific passage about the production of facsimiles see http://www.thepencilofnature.com/plate-23-hagar-in-the-desert/; for an image showing Fox Talbot's photographic copy of an ink drawing seehttp://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/129898/william-henry-fox-talbot-hagar-in-the-desert-british-1844/ [all three links accessed 27 January 2017].

[54] In 1841, Fox Talbot invented a paper negative that he named a calotype, uniting the two Greek words καλός (beautiful) and τύπος (print). This invention was a breakthrough in the photographic field and the negative–positive principle laid the basis for modern photography. It should be noted that there are several photographic processes that do not use this principle. Daguerreotypes, photograms, luminograms, or instant prints such as Polaroids® are examples of unique photographic techniques produced without negatives. In all these instances, just one unique photographic image is produced.

[55] It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to examine the various meanings given by scholars to the concept of convention. For further reference see Miller 2011, 328–333; Lewis 1969; Harman 2003, 53–59.

Thus, a convention is a recurrent agreement among a group or an entire population without an explicit normative character. When it becomes a widespread practice, law may sanction it.[56] A typical example of a convention that becomes an obligation is the custom to drive on the right side of the road, as is the case in continental Europe and the United States, or on the left side, as in the United Kingdom and in Australia.

The term reduction, as it is employed in this dissertation, follows Genette's definition as an operation of analysis, selection, and replacement. The act of analysis concerns the identification of the object's properties. Selection involves a distinction between the object's constituting properties and the features that are not reiterated in the reproduction process. Replacement relates to the substitution of features that are not perceived as essential to the work. During the reproduction process, some characteristics are fundamental and, therefore, maintained in each rendition, while other features will be lost in translation and substituted by other new elements. Hence, it is through an act of reduction to the essential properties – or, to use Genette's term, 'constituent' features – and the substitution of 'contingent' elements that we conventionally concord that the reproduced works are the same (Genette 1997a, 82–90).

This chapter is divided into three sections: the first part introduces Genette's and Nelson Goodman's theories; it describes the convention of reduction for multiple artworks such as prints and photographs, and examines it in relation to the case studies' reproduction history. The second section analyses, through the prism of Carlo Ginzburg's essay "Spie di un paradigma indiziario" (1979), how conservation is, fundamentally, a qualitative discipline, how fine art conservators are usually trained to see and discern the specificity of objects, and how this ability can conflict with the reductive approach needed to accept reproduction as a conservation strategy. The third section returns to Genette and the theoretical framework he has suggested for artworks that exist in more than one version. To summarize, this chapter has a circular structure, Genette – Ginzburg – Genette, and its goal is to problematize the notion of reproduction described by Genette by introducing the specific gaze conservators use when examining a photographic artwork by using Ginzburg's essay.

[56] The origin of convention can be found in Roman law where a *conventio* was an informal agreement between parties, which may have formed the basis of a contract. In order to become a contract, a convention had to be sanctioned by external, legal formalities (Burdick 2004, 431).

2.1 The convention of reduction

Autographic and allographic arts

In the 1990s, Genette contributed to the field of aesthetics with a two-part study. The two volumes were published in French respectively in 1994 and 1997 both under the same title, *L'Oeuvre de l'Art*. The subtitle of the first book is *Immanence et transcendance*, the other one is titled *La relation esthétique*. For this research, only the first book in its English translation will be used.

At the beginning of this book, Genette introduces himself as a specialist of literary studies and explains that his engagement with aesthetics derives from the belief that literature should be considered an art as well. It was his conviction that in order to better understand literature it was necessary to widen the field of interest to theory of art and aesthetics. He argued that if literature was to be considered an art, "one is likely to learn something more about it by finding out what *kind* of art it is, what kind the others are, and, indeed, what an art in general is" (Genette 1997a, 2). It is from this search that the author developed his taxonomy, his theory on the different types of art forms, and how these forms function.

According to Genette, an artwork has simultaneously two modes of existence and the two sections in the book correspond to this division. The first part is named 'immanence' and deals with the artwork's physical presence, or in what a work of art consists of. The second one is titled 'transcendence' and examines the experience the artwork produces. For Genette, a work of art cannot exist without its physical manifestation (immanence) and its ideal expression (transcendence). An artwork is thus more than only the materials it is made of. The Greek statue *Venus de Milo* is more than the white marble from which it is hewn, and the *Mona Lisa* is more than the paint that Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) employed for his masterpiece. An artwork is simultaneously its material embodiment and the experience it induces. Genette also argued that material embodiment can be rather problematic for forms of art such as music or literature, whose 'nature' is not physical, as well as for reproducible works that do not consist of a single artefact, but of several objects.

For his book, Genette employed the theory presented by Nelson Goodman in *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (1968). Genette, though, proposed an additional elaboration of Goodman's categorization, and this further development is especially helpful for works that are not unique but exist as multiple ones. In order to grasp Genette's text, it is necessary to briefly introduce Goodman's terminology.

Goodman defined the artwork's identity by means of its 'history of production' and whether this is integral or not to the work. He made a distinction between 'autographic'

works, like paintings, drawings, and carved sculpture, and 'allographic' works, such as music and literature. The way an object is produced and by whom is significant for the autographic work's identity, while the history of production plays a lesser role for an allographic work. In order to be allographic, a work should comply with a 'notational system', in which its essential or 'constitutive' properties are summarized and where each symbol in the system (an alphabet letter or a musical note) corresponds to only one item and, conversely, one item needs to correspond to just one symbol.[57]

According to Goodman, pictures do not function in a notational system or scheme and therefore, they are 'semantically dense'. In paintings, each small difference in characters, such as a heavier, darker line, or a rounder shape, is semantically important. For Goodman, painting is the autographic art form *par excellence:*

> In painting, on the contrary, with no such alphabet of characters, none of the pictorial properties — none of the properties the picture has as such — is distinguished as constitutive; no such features can be dismissed as contingent, and no deviation as insignificant (Goodman 1968, 116).

Being 'semantically dense' implies that all characteristics of an autographic work are equally important and therefore not dismissible. For a painting, it is relevant whether Rembrandt (1606–1669) or Michelangelo (1475–1564) painted the composition. While allographic forms are exemplified as:

> All that matters is what may be call *sameness of spelling:* exact correspondence as sequence of letters, spaces, and punctuation marks. Any sequence […] that so corresponds to a correct copy is itself correct, and nothing is more the original work than is such correct copy (Ibid., 115–116).

For a (printed) book or a musical score it is not relevant if that specific object was made by Petrarca (1304–1374) or Mozart (1756–1791) in order to keep their authorial authenticity. What matters is that the book or the musical score exactly corresponds to the notational system or scheme. Alterations in contingent features like fonts

[57] Goodman argued that natural languages fail to have a notational system because of words' ambiguities and the presence of 'semantic disjointness'. The first implies that in a language a word can have more meanings (homonyms), the second that two words can semantically intersect each other and therefore refer to the same thing or person. Because of these characteristics, natural languages are organized in a notational scheme rather than a 'notational system' (Goodman 1968, 156).

or format do not affect the authenticity of Petrarca's text or Mozart's score, while a deviation in the constitutive properties does have a profound effect. For example on the one hand, pocketsize or deluxe editions of the *Canzoniere* (1336–1374) are still considered the same text as both have retained an identical sameness of spelling.[58] On the other hand, two versions with a different spelling and/or word sequence cannot both be considered Petrarca's genuine, authentic masterpiece as the sameness of spelling was not retained and alterations in the words or sentence arrangement have occurred. Original manuscripts of books and scores represent a special case, as they are autographic and allographic at the same time. The author's calligraphy makes the manuscript autographic, as the handwriting peculiarities cannot be transferred to other copies, but the text can be reduced to a notational system, the alphabet, therefore it can be replicated to different books.[59]

To summarize, Goodman divided artworks into two categories, autographic and allographic. The classification was made on the basis of the history of production and if the work could be reduced to constituent properties. For an autographic work, such as a painting, this reduction is not possible.[60] Every characteristic, such as the thickness of the brushstroke or the colour density of the paint, is relevant. In contrast, allographic works have been reduced to a notational system or scheme and the exact correspondence to this system makes it possible to replicate them.

Multiple autographic artworks

Due to their complexity and diversity, artistic practices are generally difficult to categorize in rigid classifications such as the one proposed by Goodman. Goodman himself was well aware of the fact that the borderline between autographic and allographic art forms is not always so clear-cut.[61] In his book, he acknowledged the possibility of having multiple autographic works, such as prints, that are, simultaneously autographic and multiple. The author stated:

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[58] Francesco Petrarca's masterpiece is known in English as *Songbook* or lesser known with the Latin title *Francisci Petrarchae laureati poetae Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*.

[59] It should be noted that a strict division is often difficult to make as attested by the establishment of authenticity and original forms of literary texts by philological studies. In the case of Petrarca, two original autographic manuscripts of the *Canzoniere* have been preserved and each of them presents differences in the text. The first book, Codex Vaticano latino 3196, represents a draft edition and therefore it is also known as *Codice degli Abbozzi* as in Italian the word *abbozzi* means drafts or sketches. The other one, Codex Vaticano latino 3195, represents a more definitive version but it is partially autograph and partially have been transcribed by his personal secretary Giovanni Malpaghini. For further reference see Barolini and Storey 2007.

[60] The high-end reproduction of the painting *The Wedding Feast of Cana* (1563) by Paolo Caliari (1528–1588), also known as Veronese, may complicate this view. For further reference see Latour and Lowe 2011, 275–297.

> The example of printmaking refutes the unwary assumption that in every autographic art a particular work exists only as unique object. The line between an autographic and allographic art does not coincide with that between a singular and multiple art (Ibid., 115).

Genette, who expanded on Goodman's theory, was also conscious of the difficulties that the dichotomy between autographic and allographic arts presented. He warned his readers that there would be always some 'mixed', 'ambiguous', or 'intermediate' cases. Mixed cases are for example, concrete poems where the text is tied to the materiality of a particular way of writing. Ambiguous and intermediate cases are practices or objects that find themselves in between the autographic and allographic regimes. He introduced for this purpose an additional, 'in-between' category that was able to characterize multiple works of art.

> I will draw a further distinction, among real objects of immanence, between those which consist in a unique object, like the *Mona Lisa*, and those consisting in several objects assumed to be identical, like *The Thinker* or *Melancholia* (Genette 1997a, 31).[62]

Genette reflected upon the fact that certain autographic works are not unique but they are formed by several objects that are "more or less interchangeable from an artistic point of view and that the existence of such works depends on the fact that their 'history of production' includes two stages" (Genette 1997a, 44). Here, the author built on the distinction made by Goodman on one-stage and two-stage art.[63] This division concerned the phases in which an artwork is produced. The end product of one-stage arts is the result of just one step. A two-stage artwork consists of two phases, where the second step is a derivative of the first one. He called two-stage artworks, capable of producing multiple objects in the second stage, as multiple autographic works.

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[61] Genette allows the possibility of a shifting between the two regimes when he stated: "that an allographic art can eventually become autographic again" (Ibid., 81). It is interesting to note that other scholars have also proposed a revision of the categories autographic/allographic. With regard to Sol LeWitt's *Wall Paintings*, philosopher Renée van der Vall suggested classifying these works as works that "*hover between* the two categories", rather than as autographic works, or allographic ones, or autographic and allographic simultaneously. The works may change direction over time, according to a shifting practice (Van der Vall 2015, 300–301).

[62] Genette refers here to Leonardo's painting *Mona Lisa* (1503–1506), Rodin's statue *The Thinker* (1904), in French *Le Penseur*, and Dürer's print *Melancholia* (1514).

[63] See Goodman 1968, 114.

Many art forms have more than just one step during the creation process. A painting, for example, can be the result of many preliminary drafts or sketches. Yet, a draft cannot be considered instrumental to a painting as this can be directly created on the canvas without any preliminary studies. In the case of multiple autographic objects, this is not possible as both stages are necessary. Here, the relationship between the two stages is a strong kinship: the single object, produced in the first stage, is a 'model' or 'matrix' that guides, controls, and realizes the object in the next following stage. In cast sculpture, the mould acts as the model, in printmaking it is the plate that functions as a model, while in photography generally it is the negative that serves as a model.[64] All these techniques use a mechanical process of realization and this strengthens the connection between the two stages.[65]

Genette recognized the great technical differences within the generic term of photography and thus he made a distinction between one-stage and two-stage photography. Some of the techniques, such as daguerreotypes and instant film photographs, should be classified as autographic because the photographic images are the outcome of a one-stage process of realization. Others, such as the works under study, are multiple autographic arts because they are the result of a two-stage mode of production, in which the negative forms the first stage and the photographic print the second one (Genette 1997a, 40–41).[66]

The principal characteristic of a two-stage artwork is to have a model, created in the first stage, which may produce several 'identical' objects in the second stage. It is important to recognize that variations in the model produce different kinds of artefacts in the second stage, such as Rembrandt's several re-workings of the etching plate. In printmaking, each change of the plate is recorded as a different state: for example, Rembrandt's *Christ Presented to the People [Ecce Homo]* (1655) has eight distinct

[63] See Goodman 1968, 114.

[64] In this chapter, negative and positive transparencies are used interchangeably. It should be noted that some photographic processes employ positives rather than negatives for making photographic prints as in the case of Van Der Kaap's *Lalalalalight*. This aspect is further discussed in chapter five.

[65] Tapestry making is also a two-stage artwork. According to Genette, an essential difference exists though between tapestry making and the other arts with multiple products. This difference resides in its principle of realization. The author uses Louis Prieto's distinction of model: the second realization can employ a 'matrix' or a 'signal'. A matrix is used in a mechanical process of realization such as printmaking, photography, and cast sculpture. In tapestry-making the process of realization needs an interpretive reading of the signal, the cartoon. The weaver needs to interpret the model, mostly a painting or an oil sketch, and transpose it as faithful as possible in a design formed by coloured wool threads (Genette 1997a, 49). See Prieto 1987, 31–41.

[66] Genette referred only to analogue photography and he never wrote about digital photography. In 1994, when he wrote his book, digital photography was only beginning to be considered.

states and *Abraham Francen, Apothecary* (1657) has up to nine states.[67] Variations may also occur in the second stage, but these normally do not lead to a different state or version. The inking of the plate, the various chemical fixing baths, or the darkroom manipulation techniques such as dodging or burning in photography can produce very different results. For example, by blocking or allowing more exposure in certain areas, a photographic print might become lighter or darker than another print that has not undergone any manipulation. Despite the disparities, the two photographic prints will not be acknowledged as two separate versions and they will be regarded as two 'identical' works. This implies that the majority of people tend to overlook the differences at the second stage.

The identicalness of multiple autographic objects is largely guaranteed by means of a convention. It is because of this implicit understanding or 'belief' in reproduction, embedded and accepted by society at large, that equivalence among the various versions is agreed upon: in the first place, by following the model in the first stage, and secondly, and only to a certain degree, by the material consistency of the various prints in the second stage. It is important to note that multiple prints taken from the same negative are viewed as identical, especially when the prints come from the same batch. In this instance, it is more likely that the same materials and techniques have been used during the printing process. Yet, multiple objects from the same batch may as well be different, due to technical limitations or to the effect of external factors that may influence their following form and physical nature (Ibid., 46). Technical qualities and properties may influence the number of possible multiplications. Cast models and printing plates, for instance, degenerate after a certain number of multiplications and therefore the quality of the objects tends to decline after a while. Cast model and dry point plates are inclined to deteriorate at a faster rate than engraving, etching plates, or modern photographic negatives. From a conservation point of view, external factors, such as a particular environment or a specific conservation history, may have an effect on artefacts produced in the same manner and with the same materials. Two cast bronze statues or two etchings produced at the same time with the same materials can, for instance, differ significantly from each other, depending on the climate in which they have been preserved or on the conservation treatments the two exemplars have undergone in the past.

The works under study comply with Genette's definition of multiple autographic artworks. Their manufacture is, for the most part, the result of a two-stage production:

[67] For further reference on Christ Presented to the People [Ecce Homo] see Hinterding and Rutgers 2013, vol. 2, nr. 290/VIII, p. 256 and on Abraham Francen, Apothecary see White and Boon 1969, vol. 1, pp. 126–127, nr. B273; vol. 2, pp. 219–221.

the negatives function as models in the first stage, and the photographic prints produced according a mechanical process are the result of the second stage. However, the option of having more than one photograph printed from the negative was not contemplated at the beginning of the creation process for three of the four works under study.[68] Only years later it was decided to create a new print as the works turned out to be damaged. The absence of multiple prints at the beginning is not necessarily a problem for identifying the case studies as multiple autographic works. According to Genette, the existence of multiple objects is just one of the possible options:

> [To multiply] is only *a* possibility that is not necessarily always exploited. It is entirely possible to take *a single* bronze, *a single* print, or *a single* photographic print from the original model (Ibid., 49. Emphasis added).

This means that a work can 'potentially' be a multiple, since its manufacture complies with a two-stage production, but it does not necessarily need to exist as a multiple. Artists can choose and decide whether to produce just one print from the model rather than multiples ones. This decision can be determined by artistic preferences or by art market driven reasons. The art market and the art field in general tend to value 'unique' photographic works higher than editioned ones and this tendency often results in a higher monetary value.

With regard to three of the four case studies studied in this dissertation, the artists initially decided to produce a unique print, rather than multiple ones. Only after discernible damage was the option of reproduction envisioned, intended as an act of substitution and replacement and thus acknowledging photography as a reproducible medium. The creation of these new works raises questions about how to consider the initial photographic works and the later ones. Should the initial works be regarded as the originals and the later works as derivative copies, even if the creating artists produce them? Or should the works be acknowledged as variations of the same works? As will be discussed in the detailed analysis of the case studies, there are no straightforward answers to these difficult questions. Moreover, to complicate matters, the equivalence among the initial works and the later ones is problematic from a material and technical perspective. In all instances, the reproduction occurred at least ten years after the first creation moment: Baldessari printed the second version of *Virtues and Vices*

[68] As will be argued in chapter five, Van Der Kaap's *Xiada, (Girls' dorm) Xiamen* differs from the other case studies analysed in this research and was not created as a unique work, but as a limited edition. This implies a different conceptual approach to photography. Moreover, *Xiada (Girls' dorm), Xiamen* was reproduced shortly after the printing of the work's first photographs.

(for Giotto) in 1992, eleven years after the first printing; Dibbets printed the second version of *Comet Sea 3°– 60°* in 1997, thirteen years after the first creation, while he made the third version in 2012, thirty-nine years after the first original photographs and fifteen years after the second photographs were printed; Van Der Kaap reproduced *Lalalalalight* in 2011, which is twenty years after the first work saw the light. In the long interval between the two printing phases technology changed and evolved.

Reproduction as subtractive and additive process

Genette underscored that the identicalness of multiple autographic objects is 'guaranteed' by a mechanical process of realization, but it is above all based on a convention. This shared agreement among various groups of people might explain why material and observable variations among photographic prints are generally overlooked and photography is perceived as a 'reproducible medium'. But in order to consider something an acceptable reproduction, people need to neglect or 'disregard' a certain number of distinctive properties present in the first occurrence, which will eventually disappear and will be replaced by other, contingent features in the subsequent iteration (Ibid., 82).

This insight might be an interesting starting point for how to interpret the reproduction of the works under study. Some features might be considered 'constituent' as these were retained during the reproduction process, while others might be labelled as 'contingent' as other ones replaced them. Reproduction might, thus, be viewed as a subtractive activity, since it removes characteristics that are not regarded essential, but, at the same time, it is also an additive practice, as it introduces new features that were not there in the first place. This awareness might help to value the reproduction process and the resulting variations differently. The subtraction and addition of features might not necessarily be sensed as something negative, as a discrepancy from what is believed to be the 'original' and thus should be avoided at all costs.[69] The acknowledgment of these two practices might help to admit the incapacity to exactly reproduce photographic prints and thus it might allow a certain degree of change. In this regard, this framework is more in tune with other conservation strategies that have been developed for the preservation of complex contemporary art objects. These approaches have enabled and tried to manage changes, rather than to freeze the work in its initial preferred state, which is usually labelled as the original state.

[69] In conservation literature, the term 'original' often relates to the state of the object immediately after the artist completed it. Original bears the meaning of the origin, the beginning of the work. For further references on the theoretical difficulties about the way the notion of original is used in conservation see Muñoz Viñas 2005, 92 and Van Saaze 2013, 24–25.

In the case studies, the artists have more or less consciously defined what the constitutive elements of the photographic artworks were. By analysing the production and reproduction histories, it seems that the artists considered certain properties of fundamental importance and others of lesser significance. Correspondence to the photographic image, dimension and mode of presentation were mostly viewed as the artworks' constitutive properties, while material and technical equivalence were perceived as contingent features, which were allowed to vary, to a certain extent, in each subsequent repetition.

As it turns out, the distinction between constituent and contingent properties is not always so clear-cut in practice. Changes in values and collective cultural norms greatly influence the prominence given to certain characteristics and unforeseen circumstances may deeply affect the course of a reproduction (Ibid., 87).[70] It is almost a truism to claim that the way artists, museum staffs, and society at large look at and value art evolves in time. One should realize that the constituent–contingent classification is an area where practice is shifting practice and the identification of these two categories can change over time, depending on the cultural norms of a certain period, as will be further discussed in relation to Baldessari's example.

It should be acknowledged that the use of the terms 'contingent' and 'constituent' as it is proposed here for the analysis of the works under study differs from Genette's theory. According to Genette, the distinction between constituent and contingent is only applicable to allographic works and it is not tenable for autographic works. For the latter, this differentiation is problematic or even impossible as all the properties forming these types of works are per definition constituent. Despite this theoretical difficulties, the proposed distinction is, in my opinion, useful in the examination of the reproduction process of the case studies as underscores a comparable activity of selection as the one described by Genette. In his reflection about the transition from the autographic to the allographic regime, Genette remarked that this shifting:

> Presupposes, indeed *consists in*, in a more or less conscious mental operation that analyses an object into its constituent and contingent properties, picking out only the first with a view to producing […] a correct iteration that will in its turn display these constitutive properties, accompanied by new contingent properties (Ibid.).

[70] For further reference on other authors that have reflected on shifting values and cultural norms see chapter four.

A similar process can be detected during the substitution of a photographic artwork with another one. The artists and the museum staff have made, through a mental operation, a distinction between what they considered essential for the works and what they deemed of less importance. They have agreed to 'neglect' certain features in order to be able to accept the reproduced version as a genuine substitution of the previous version. This act enabled them to identify the two photographic artworks as "two different instances of the same 'constitutive property'" (Ibid., 86). By using the terms 'constituent' and 'contingent', it is possible draw the attention on the features that were, from the beginning, considered indispensable for each reiterations and on those that were not and therefore replaceable by other properties.

2.2 The conservator's eye

In this section, it will be argued that conservators are traditionally trained to actively observe and give meaning to material properties. For example, by visually examining an object, they are able to discern ageing mechanisms that may give clues about the object's history. Conservators are taught to look for and distinguish material differences, and their professional 'gaze', which I propose calling the 'conservator's eye', shows similarities with the so-called clinical eye. The latter is usually described as a keen visual observation within medical practice.[71] In the context of this research, observation plays a crucial role and expresses an active process of seeing together with the intellectual engagement of the conservator, who knows what to look at or for.[72]

Carlo Ginzburg's essay facilitates a discussion of how visual inspection is at the core of conservation. This specific way of looking, in which the uniqueness of the object is taken into account, is one of the central motives that keep conservation in the sphere of qualitative disciplines. The practice of mapping will be presented here as an example of active observation, in which the conservator systematically marks his or her findings during or after the work's inspection. Although a conservator's visual examination, as all other kind of observations, is biased by the viewer's personal and cultural 'preferences', it is through a mapping that he or she is able to note the material

[71] For further reference on the notion of clinical eye see Gonzáles-Crussi 2006, 195–226; and Foucault 2003, 131–157.

[72] The pivotal role of observation as a knowledge-producing tool has been well described by physiologist Robert Root-Bernstein in his book *Spark of Genius*. The author remarked: "All knowledge begins in observation. We must be able to perceive our world accurately to be able to discern patterns of action, abstract their principles, make analogies between properties of things, create models of behaviours, and innovate fruitfully" (Root-Bernstein 1999, 30).

specificity of a work. Moreover, a visual assessment and its subsequent mapping imply a certain amount of simplification of the object's material characteristics. Despite these limitations, a conservator is able to detect and give meaning to material aspects that for laymen might be negligible either in size or importance. It will also be suggested that, because of this way of looking, conservators generally have feelings of discomfort about accepting photographic reproduction as a possible conservation strategy.

Paradigma indiziario and the 'conservator's eye'

At the beginning of his essay "Spie di un paradigma indiziario" (1979), the Italian historian Carlo Ginzburg reflected on how disciplines such as the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), the literary genre of Arthur Conan Doyle's (1859–1930) crime fictions and the so-called Morellian method in art history share common ground.[73] To a certain extent, all these fields employ the method used in the so-called *semeiotica medica*: the discipline that allows physicians to diagnose diseases inaccessible to direct observation on the basis of (superficial) signs lying close to the surface, sometimes irrelevant to the untrained eye (Ginzburg 1979, 1–8).[74] In the Morellian method, psychoanalysis, and crime fiction, visual observation of clues and microscopic traces play a central role in allowing the art connoisseur, the psychotherapist, and the investigator to deduce and arrive at conclusions that are inaccessible to the others, to the inexpert Dr. Watson among us. Ginzburg went back in time and outlined the history of what he called 'human sciences' and traced their origin in the hunting practice:

[73] Translated in English as "Morelli, Freud, Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method" by Anna Davin, *History Workshop*, n.9, spring 1980, 5–36. Passages of Ginzburg's article are quoted in this text, relying on Davin's translated version. However, some terms are left intentionally in Italian or are translated by me, because sometimes Davin's translation fails to grasp Ginzburg's nuances. In the essay's introduction Davin admitted: "This article by an Italian comrade and historian is very different from anything we have included in History Workshop Journal before. It unselfconsciously draws on philosophy, quotes Latin, and ranges across societies and periods in a way which is extraordinary – even shocking – to the English reader" (Davin 1980, 5). Davin, further on in the introduction, summarized how Ginzburg: "examines the relationship between 'formal' and 'informal' knowledge, 'high 'and 'low', lore and science. His concern, in short, is historical epistemology – the history and theory of the construction of knowledge" (Ibid.). The English title is, in my opinion, misleading and fails to do justice to the greater scope of the essay. Ginzburg introduced Giovanni Morelli, Sigmund Freud, and Sherlock Holmes at the beginning of his text as examples of a particular kind of knowledge, Ginzburg's *paradigma indiziario*.

[74] In her translation of Ginzburg's essay, Davin translates the Italian term *semeiotica* into 'medical semiotics' (Ginzburg 1980, 12). In his essay on the origin of the term 'semiotics', the scholar John Deely argues that in 1689 John Locke coined the term, σημιωτική, which transliterates into Latin as *semiotica* and into English as semiotics. According to Deely, Locke deliberately misspelled the medical term in order to move it into a new and larger context, namely his new science based on signs (Deely 2003, 37). To avoid confusion in this dissertation, the Italian term *semeiotica* is deliberately kept, as it exclusively indicates the specific branch of medical science concerned with the study of symptoms, known as σημιωτική ('semeiotics'), to which Ginzburg refers.

> For thousands of years, mankind lived by hunting. In the course of endless pursuits hunters learned to construct the appearance and movements of an unseen quarry through its tracks – prints in soft ground, snapped twigs, droppings, snagged hairs or feathers, smells, puddles, threads of saliva. They learnt to sniff, to observe, to give meaning and context to the slightest trace. They learnt to make complex calculations in an instant, in shadowy wood or treacherous clearing (Ginzburg 1980, 12).

The author drew a line between the natural sciences and human sciences in the course of the seventeenth century. Following the Galilean method, the natural sciences became quantitative disciplines leaning on the repetition of the observed phenomenon, which formed the basis of the so-called scientific method.

The much-theorized and discussed history and the development of the scientific method can only be touched upon in this dissertation. It may suffice to state that, in his essay, Ginzburg referred to the experimental method that Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) contributed to laying the foundations. Contemporaries regarded Galileo as a pioneer and this view has since been widely endorsed. In the nineteenth century, the Austrian philosopher and physicist Ernst Mach (1838–1916) attributed to Galileo the introduction of the experimental method in physics. Mach's view remained prevalent in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, where Galileo is identified as the first scientist to recognize the importance of doing experiments as a way of testing hypotheses (Gower 1997, 22).[75] Although the modern experimental method significantly differs from that of Galileo, in both approaches the validation of a hypothesis through an experiment plays a central role. In other words, natural science, both pure and applied, depends on experimentation that involves the observation of a phenomenon under selected and carefully controlled conditions (Ibid., 10). It is with Galileo that a distinction arises between observation and experimentation. Until the seventeenth century, scholars usually had the role of spectators or witnesses during the observation of a phenomenon. After Galileo, scholars not only observed and listened to what nature had to say, but they also started to pose questions. This change in attitude and the

[75] Some scholars have questioned the role of the experiment in Galileo's method. Alexander Koyré, for example, asserted that some of Galileo's experiments on reclined planes and falling weight were exclusively thought experiments and therefore never carried out in practice (Koyré 1953). Stilmann Drake subsequently refuted Koyré's claim, demonstrating that Galileo's theory was based on careful observations of experiments. For further reference on the reception of Galileo's thought see Drake 1999, 307–320. Giuliano Toraldo di Francia regarded the attribution of scientific method to Galileo mainly as a convention, since Galileo was neither the only, nor the first to use it. On the other hand, he was the first one that developed such a method, "no one before him formed and expressed such clear and precise ideas on science" (Toraldo di Francia 1981, 6).

transformation from observation into experiment provided the key that opened the door to the modern concept of science (Toraldo di Francia 1981, 8).

Galileo introduced two key elements in the methodology of modern natural sciences. Firstly, he promoted the formulation of questions in a simple form by reducing the number of parameters involved. A natural phenomenon can be described and determined with a number of different parameters. Some of these are essential, while others are secondary and the latter may even disturb the phenomenon that a scientist wishes to study. By eliminating the secondary parameters and therefore reducing the factors to be examined, he or she is able to research the phenomenon's behaviour as a function of the primary features. Secondly, Galileo claimed that the formulation of these questions should occur in a measurable or quantitative way.[76] In other words, the physicist should be able to define the observed phenomenon and the performed experiment in terms of mathematical measurements. More in general, science became a process of learning based on the measurement of a material world. Non-material aspects, such as art, whose aesthetic qualities can be neither confirmed, nor explained, started to be excluded from science (Rothchild 2006, 3).

The Galilean experimental method strengthened the foundations of a demonstrative science and it is nowadays seen as a turning point in the methodology of modern physics and, more generally, of science.[77] The introduction of this method marked the separation between qualitative and quantitative disciplines. As Ginzburg remarked:

> The real difficulty in applying the Galilean model lay in the degree to which a discipline was concerned with the individual. The more central were features to do with the individual, the more impossible it became to construct a body of rigorously scientific knowledge (Ginzburg 1980, 19).

[76] Galileo affirmed in a famous passage of *Il Saggiatore* (1623) known in English as the *Assayer*: "Philosophy is written in that great book which ever lies before our eyes – I mean the universe – but we cannot understand it if we do not first learn the language and grasp the symbols, in which it is written. This book is written in the mathematical language" (English translation by Thomas Salusbury 1661, 178 quoted in Burtt 2003, 75). For an explanation of the apparently conflicting terms used by Galileo and what he meant with 'philosophy' and 'mathematical language' see Toraldo di Francia 1981, 10–11.

[77] In the natural sciences, notable exceptions do exist. For scientists in fields such as astronomy as well geology it is impossible to replicate all their observations in experiments. In these disciplines, fieldwork observations are sometimes more important and provide more information than laboratory experiments. On the issue of different practices within natural sciences and the 'disunity' of scientific practice see Knorr-Cetina 1999.

On the one hand, science is based on the experimental method and it gives prominence to the reproducibility of the experiment.[78] By regulating conditions and set up, the scientist is able to control the experiment and to perform the test more than once. On the other hand, *human sciences* or the so-called Humanities became qualitative disciplines that study unique objects, situations or documents. They follow a theoretical model that Ginzburg called *paradigma indiziario*, based on the gathering of knowledge through observation but without the repetition's imperative.[79] Human sciences' findings have thus always had a margin of unpredictability and uncertainty.

Like other humanities' disciplines, conservation deals with objects that, in most cases, are materially and culturally unique. Similar paintings or sculptures are materially different. Even in 'identical' photographs, every print differs from the other as paper quality might differ, exposure time might change, enlarger bulbs and filters might age, and chemical substances might become depleted (Modrak and Anthes 2011, 175). Objects can also be different because of the various events that have shaped their lives: due to changes in its physical state, use, cultural, and historical contexts. In sum, the specificity of the art object is decisive to the qualitative aspect of fine art conservation.

To look at clues or traces is part of the physical examination that conservators perform during the determination of the object's condition. As object conservator Barbara Appelbaum described in her book *Conservation Treatment Methodology* (2007), conservators look for various types of signs: signs of the object's constructions, ageing, use that corroborates the materials' identification. All these signs determine

[78] A difference exists between 'replicability' and 'reproducibility' in science. The first stands for the exact replication under the same conditions at different times of the experiment, the second yields the reproduction of the experiment by performing similar but not identical tests at different times, in different locations, and in a somewhat different setting. Generally, scientists are more interested in the reproducibility of the results rather than the precise replication of the experimental results. Reproducibility of the results is preferred because it implies the robustness of the initial enquiry. Replicability of the experiment and its setup becomes important when subsequent attempts to reproduce the experimental results have failed. For further reference see C. Drummond 2009, http://cogprints.org/7691/7/ICMLws09.pdf [accessed 6 April 2015] and Casadevall and Fang 2010, 4972–4975.

[79] Davin's article translates *paradigma indiziario* as 'conjectural model' using the old and nowadays obsolete meaning of the word 'conjecture'. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), this term means in its archaic denotation: "The interpretation of signs or omens; interpretation of dreams; divining; a conclusion as to coming events drawn from signs or omens; a forecast, a prognostication." However, in its current connotation, the term 'conjecture' and its derivative 'conjectural' carry a negative sense. According to the OED, it is: "The formation or offering of an opinion on grounds insufficient to furnish proof," while the Merriam Webster Dictionary defines it as: "An opinion or idea formed without proof or sufficient evidence." The Italian word *indiziario* does not have any negative implication and therefore it is intentionally kept in this text in order to avoid confusion.

the physical state of the object, and tell the objects' history and behaviour (Appelbaum 2007, 27). According to the author, conservators have their own way of looking at objects and they see things that non-conservators do not see. Proper conservation education trains conservators to look for the physical details, developing what Appelbaum defined as the conservator's professional gaze (Ibid., 26). The author reflected on how, through looking at signs, conservators are able to draw conclusions that, for others – the inexpert – are not visible.

Ginzburg's hunters have learnt to observe, give meaning, and context to the slightest traces. Similarly, according to anthropologist Tim Ingold, an archaeologist's training is also a learning process attending to clues, which the inexperienced might overlook. In this light, archaeologists as well as conservators can be characterized as "knowledgeable hunters", who through an "education of attention", are gathering clues and formulating conclusions (Ingold 1993, 153). The specific way to look at objects' material characteristics, which I have proposed calling the conservator's eye, is the result of professional training. By means of this gaze, conservators are generally able to see, detect, draw conclusions from peculiarities, and therefore disclose important clues about the object's history. This competence gives prominence to material characteristics.

Attentive visual examination: Sight and mapping

Conservators rely heavily on sight when observing an object in order to gather information.[80] Sight is used not only during the initial physical examination, but also when performing the conservation treatment and after its completion in order to judge the resulting outcome. Sight and visual microscopic examination of artistic or historical objects may be regarded as one of the defining properties of the profession. This is underscored by the way conservators are portrayed to the public by fine art museums and professional conservation organizations. A quick Internet search shows that many websites present conservators looking carefully at art objects, often helped by visual aids, such as handheld lamps, goggles or stereomicroscopes.[81] These images illustrate how conservators should, ideally, look at all the details of the object's surface, often at a microscopic level.

When a conservator examines a photographic print, he or she will look for signs often helped by visual aids. As a professional, he or she will note the surface's texture,

[80] During a physical examination, conservators do not rely exclusively on sight, they might use other senses as well. Touch, smell, and hearing can also provide useful information (Appelbaum 2007, 27).

the characteristics of the photographic paper, and the image layer. The conservator will take notice of any sign of deterioration, ageing, physical mark, label, and inscription on the front or on the back of the photographs and, if present, the clues coming from the frame or album in which the print is held. All these elements might help to identify the making process, the history of the object, and its present condition. In order to annotate all this data and information a conservator will make an object mapping. This can be a mental map or a tangible document with drawings, diagrams, documentary photographs, and text in the form of a condition report. Most conservators use a two-dimensional diagram or documentary photographs that depict the object in its entirety or a part of it. Cartesian coordinates might pinpoint, more or less exactly, the location of the phenomena as well as numbers, lines, colours, key coding, or combinations of these attributes that specify the type and the position of the observed details.[82] A conservator will write down in a concise and simplified way the noticed aspects by using marks or schematic drawings, or employing a more or less agreed lexicon that describes particular processes. It goes without saying that the extent of a mapping and conservation report varies from a concise page to volume-thick reports, depending on the nature of the object described and for the purpose of the report.

Mapping, as a documentation tool, is used here as an example of attentive visual

[81] On the websites of the Tate in the United Kingdom, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and the Museum of Modern of Art (MoMA) in New York, the pages relating to the conservation department present a conservator/sight combination. For further reference see http://www.tate.org.uk/about/our-work/conservation; http://www.stedelijk.nl/collectie/restauratie; http://www.metmuseum.org/research/conservation-and-scientific-research, http://www.moma.org/explore/collection/conservation/index#projects, [all accessed on 19 June 2014]. Another powerful image employed on professional websites to illustrate conservation practice is the hand of the conservator, often holding a small tool, such as a tweezers, a scalpel or a brush, when treating an object. This association can be found for examples on the websites of the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Institute of Conservation (ICON) in London, Istituto Centrale per il Restauro in Rome, the American Institute of Conservation, and Restauratoren Nederland. For further reference see http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/c/conservation/; http://www.icon.org.uk/; http://www.icr.beniculturali.it/; http://www.conservation-us.org/; http://www.restauratoren.nl/ [all accessed on 19 June 2014]. Often, a fusion of two images, a conservator looking carefully with visual aids and a conservator's hand-held small tool, are used together on the same webpage, emphasizing the ideal qualities a conservator should have: an investigative professional gaze and manual dexterity. The stereomicroscope and small hand tools may be regarded, in this light, as attributes of the profession.

[82] The accurate locating of the position has increased immensely through the use of Geographical Information System (GIS) for the mapping of artworks. Two examples of state-of-the-art mapping that uses advanced cartography and database technology are: Mondrian's painting *Victory Boogie Woogie* and the thirty-one daguerreotype plates researched within the Daguerreotype Research Portal. In both examples, the objects' surface is used as an interface where research results are tagged at the exact position where the features have been observed. For further information, see Van Bommel, Janssen and Spronk 2012 and the website of the Daguerreotype Research Portal http://research.mfa.org/# [accessed 8 July 2014].

examination. The mapping of an artwork, like other types of maps, requires a selection of features.[83] As with all observations, the visual examination and the consequent mapping are not unbiased. The conservator's personal choices as well as historical and contextual considerations have an influence on which material as well aesthetics characteristics will be noted and written down.[84] Moreover, the ability to look at different distances, from the microscopic to the overall level may be considered one of the main difficulties of the discipline. Conservators should ideally be able to zoom in and zoom out, to see at the same time the objects' (material) details and the artwork's totality. This challenge is convincingly described by Appelbaum, who wrote:

> After sweating over the filling and inpainting of a loss in a flat black area, it is difficult for a conservator to stand back and view the whole object without staring at "that damned spot" even if a normal viewer might be unlikely to notice it (Appelbaum 2007, 26).

Despite these limitations, it is during an active observation that a trained conservator takes into account the complexity and specificity of an object. He or she derives a great part of his or her object's knowledge by the careful visual examination and scrutiny of the object itself. To an untrained eye, the object's material characteristics may often remain unnoticed and therefore easily overlooked. This capacity to discern might explain the discomfort conservators, trained in a traditional way, feel in considering reproduction as a viable conservation strategy.[85]

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[83] It should be remarked that a map or the action of mapping per definition does not disclose all the information and aspects present in the artworks itself. In this regard, conservators might be compared to cartographers or mapmakers as these professionals also use abstraction and simplification in their work. The need for simplification for geographical maps is beautifully expressed in the literary works of Lewis Carrol, in the novel *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* (1893), and in Jorge Luis Borges short story *Del rigor en la ciencia* (1946). In both texts, readers are reminded of the impossibility of having detailed maps that include all the facets of what is portrayed. In order to arrive at such a degree of reliability and perfection, a map should have the exact measurement of the represented, or as is written in Carrol's novel "on the scale of a *mile to the mile!*" (Carrol 1893, 169). This, of course, nullifies the need for such representation.

[84] Conservators are usually well aware of the difficulties or even impossibilities involved in writing down documentation such as condition and treatment reports, artists' interviews free from ambiguities and of value judgements. In old or even new reports, the significance of the terms might change because of the context or and the use over time. The subjectivity of the interview as well as the interviewer may colour the result and the interpretation of the meetings (Beerkens et al. 2012, 53). Specifications and descriptions cannot eliminate all the interpretative decisions needed for the installing of complex artworks, such as installations or time-based media (Laurenson 2011, 238).

[85] The term 'discomfort' is used here as elsewhere in the dissertation to express a feeling of uneasiness that something does not fully conform to certain expectations.

As mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, reproduction as an exact replication at a material level cannot be achieved. Reproducibility is a 'belief' based on a convention and it is an act of reduction. Constituent elements are kept during the process while contingent elements are lost in the reiteration and substituted by other properties. It is because of this ability to discern and give meaning to material clues and traces, following Ginzburg's *paradigma indiziario,* that it remains difficult for a conservator to agree with Genette's remark that differences among the various versions of a multiple autographic work are too small to be taken into account (Genette 1997a, 174). According to Genette's view, the differences between the various versions of a multiple autographic work are considered to be too small to be acknowledged. Accepting this position implies that the material and technical uniqueness of a photographic print inevitably fades away by remaining unnoticed and undocumented.

2.3 The plural work

This section returns to Genette's framework and will argue that the case studies should not be viewed exclusively as multiple autographic artworks, but rather they might also be regarded as 'plural works'. As discussed elsewhere, the notion of autographic multiple works does not do justice to the material differences between the various versions. It is only through a practice of reduction that changes are overlooked, as these are often deemed too small and therefore remain unacknowledged. However, part of a conservator's knowledge arises from in-depth visual examination. The conservator's eye is trained not to reduce, but it is taught to notice and detect material peculiarities. For photograph conservators, a photograph is more than just the image it shows. It is a fusion of the image and the material components forming the image carrier (Romer 2010, 109). Conservators need to take into account the print's material characteristics, as these might turn to bear critical information for the photograph's preservation. Each mark or trait might turn into a clue and therefore be relevant to the object's history.

It should be noted that, in his book, Genette used the term 'plural work' differently than how it is used in this dissertation. For Genette, the term defines the different interpretations that viewers or readers may give to a certain work, as well as the physical transformations that an object experiences over time. He argues that a plural work denotes a "work as an object of reception […] which takes on different appearances and meanings depending on the circumstances and the context" (Genette 1997a, 230). In its place, Genette's concept of 'plural immanence' may help to classify the works under study. In my opinion, this notion allows us to embrace the material differences of the various versions, and at the same time to depart from the distinction between

original and copy, which, for the case studies, is highly problematic since the artists themselves have produced the second or third version. Moreover, the reproduced artworks were created to substitute and replace the damaged ones.

The first part of this section will elaborate the idea of plural immanence, and what the theoretical difficulties are in applying this notion to the artworks in question. The second part will describe the criteria that define the various versions forming the artwork and outline the consequences for the caretakers of dealing with a plural artwork rather than a unique one.

Plural immanence

Genette recognized two modes of existence for works of art. The first mode is defined as 'regime of immanence' and it comprises the artwork's physical presence. The second mode is named 'regime of transcendence' and it defines the experience that the artwork induces.[86] The author defined three possible modes within the transcendence regime: plurality of immanence, partiality of immanence, and plurality of effect.[87] In this research, only the notion of plurality of immanence will be applied to the studied works. Genette described this concept as a mode, which involves several non-identical, concurrent objects, such as works, that have different versions. To the author, this mode is not necessarily restricted to allographic works but it can also be found in the autographic regime. He used the various versions of Jean-Siméon Chardin's painting *Saying Grace*, in French *Le Bénédicité,* as an example of an autographic object with plural immanence.[88]

[86] Genette describes his use of the term 'regime' in note 33 as "two kinds of functioning [that] are mutually exclusive for a given work, which cannot be autographic and allographic at the same time, just as a country cannot simultaneously be a republic and a monarchy" (Genette 1997a, 16).
[87] The second mode, named 'partiality of immanence', occurs when a work manifests itself in a fragmentary manner like a 'lacunary manifestation', such as the statue of the *Venus de Milo*, or 'indirect manifestation', such as copies, reproductions or descriptions. An indirect manifestation is something that "can provide more or less precise knowledge of a work, whenever the work itself is definitively or temporarily absent" (Ibid., 218). The third is the 'plurality of effect'. In this mode, a single object manifests itself or operates in a different way, depending on time, place, individuals or circumstances. By producing a plurality of receptions, a work never exactly generates the same effect twice and it is never invested with exactly the same meaning (Ibid., 237).
[88] Jean-Siméon Chardin (1699–1779) made the three versions in 1740, 1746, and 1761. The three paintings are now kept at the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, at the Louvre in Paris, and at the Nationalmusem in Stockholm, respectively. A different version of the painting with a young boy on the left exists and is attributed to Chardin. This is currently in the collection of the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam.

> Pluralities of immanence […] are not peculiar to the allographic regime: multiple autographic works like *The Thinker* or *Melancholia* also immanate […] in several objects, obtained by imprint, while plural autographic works, like *Saying Grace,* immanate in several objects obtained when a work is copied, by the original artist or someone else. (Genette 1997a, 112).

Thus, Genette recognized the possibility for artworks to exist as plural entities. He wrote about 'multiple immanence' when differences, stemming from the production process, are accidental and unintended, while he referred to 'plural immanence' for the variations that are deliberately made by the artist. The author was well aware of the complexities of defining the subtle differences between these two categories and how these are, for the most part, the result of cultural norms and conventions. By acknowledging the arbitrary nature of this classification, he claimed:

> This distinction, which is of course more cultural than "ontological", is also more gradual than categorical, since, as we have seen, prints pulled from the same plate are often so different that specialists do not at all regard them as equivalent (Ibid., 163).

Despite these difficulties, he considered the different versions of a painting, drawing or carved sculpture as examples of plural immanence, while the changes of various casts or prints are illustrations of multiple immanence. Here again, the main difference between the two groups is given by the mode of production. For Genette, the existence of the 'model' and the mechanical process of realization are fundamental for marking the difference between the autographic works of art and multiple autographic ones as well as for the categorization between plural and multiple immanence.

The production of a new version of a painting is, thus, fundamentally different from printing several photographs from the same negative. In the first instance, the artist has deliberately decided to make a new version by making something that is considered sufficiently similar to the previous painting. Or, as Genette has contended, the new version of a work is:

> Different from the first in one degree or another, yet sufficiently similar to (and derivative of) it for cultural convention to treat it as *another version* of the same work rather than *another work* (Ibid., 164).

As a result of similar cultural conventions, the noticeable and material differences among the various photographic prints are de facto overlooked and the multiple prints are perceived as identical. Or as Genette has argued:

> Cultural convention accords a *common identity* to all proofs of "multiple" works. It effectively annuls their differences by treating these as purely technical, setting each proof in an (optional) relation of *artistic equivalence* with all others […] Works with replicas, in contrast, stand in an (additive) relation of complementarity (Ibid., 172. Emphasis added).

Since the borders between multiple and plural immanence are fluid and dictated mostly by convention, it is possible to depart from Genette's framework and suggest here a different viewpoint about the works under study. It is my intention to propose a mode of plural immanence for the photographic artworks, rather than one of multiple immanence. This shift makes it possible to recognize, as relevant aspects of the artworks, the visible material and artistic differences between the various sets of prints. Hence, it allows a certain degree of variation, which is inevitable when the works were or are going to be reproduced. This position moves away from the stance that conventionally considers the various prints as equivalent to each other. This decision comes, however, along with some theoretical difficulties. In certain cases, it might be problematic to reconcile Genette's ideas with this new proposition.

Plural immanence: Theoretical difficulties

To accept the works under study as works with plural immanence, it is necessary to reassess how much an artist should be engaged in the creation of a new version. According to Genette, the involvement of the artist is indispensable for works with plural immanence, while it is not for works with multiple immanence. About this distinction, he argued:

> The task of taking multiple proofs [of multiple autographic works] can be (and usually is) entrusted to simple craftsmen, while it is a defining condition of a replica, in the sense under consideration here [autographic works with more than one versions], that it be realized (at least in part) by the original artist (Ibid.).

In this view, the production of a new set of photographs can be delegated to others as the model guarantees enough identicalness among the various prints. As will be analysed in the following chapters, this stance is true to a degree. In the case studies, professional workers rather than the creating artists were involved in the reprinting

and the physical manufacture of the works. For example, Dibbets assigned the printing, the cropping, the mounting of the photographs, and the application of dry transfer letters to his technical assistants because of his aversion to being involved in the process of copying an artwork rather than being active in an artistic process (Dibbets, Van Adrichem and De Herder 2003, 32). Because of financial constraints, Baldessari entrusted the cropping and the application of dry transfer letters to the Van Abbemuseum and he agreed that these activities would take place without his direct supervision. Van Der Kaap left the industrial application of acrylic and aluminium sheets to specialized technicians. In this regard, Genette's opinion about delegating to craftsmen applies to these works. Yet, when the reproduction process is studied in more detail, it becomes clear that Genette's view applies only partially. The artists might not have been engaged manually in the process, but they were very much involved at a conceptual level. All three had a decisive role in the realization of the works: Baldessari requested that the reprinting occur in Los Angeles rather than in the Netherlands, Van Der Kaap deliberately chose for a German photographic lab because of its high working standards, Dibbets and Van Der Kaap were deeply involved in the assessment and determination of the colours for the new prints.

From the twentieth century and onwards, the physical realization of a work of art and its authorship do not necessarily coincide. Countless examples are known where the makers of the objects do not correspond with the authors of the works.[89] On this subject, art historian Martha Buskirk has convincingly argued that in contemporary art practices the removal of the 'artist's hand' in the making process may actually increase the importance of the artistic authorship. Since the physical object has become increasingly unable to identify what constitutes the work, the work of art relies heavily on the presence, the decision-making, and the conceptual engagement of the artist (Buskirk 2005, 15). This insight might help to overcome the distinction between multiple and plural works and recognize the involvement of Baldessari, Dibbets, and Van Der Kaap at a decisional and conceptual level rather than a manual engagement.

A second theoretical difficulty in considering the case studies as works with plural immanence comes from the following question. Are the various versions equivalent or complementary to each other? According to Genette, a work with multiple immanence

[89] Genette was aware of this development, as becomes clear in his analysis of Marcel Duchamp's (1887–1968) ready-mades, *Bottle-rack* (1914) and *L.H.O.O.Q.* (1919). Here he discussed "the regime of immanence of a very special sort of work, which has appeared only very recently, and which we call [...] *conceptual*" (Genette, 1997a, 135). The author suggested that the act of proposing becomes the work itself, but he warned at the same time "that the work consists in the act does not entirely neutralize the specificity of the object [...] to exhibit a boiler is not to exhibit a bottle-rack" (Ibid., 137).

has a relationship of 'artistic equivalence' to the various proofs, while a work with plural immanence has a relationship of 'artistic complementarity' to the various versions:

> *The Thinker* immanates in this particular cast or in another, the assumption being that, when you have seen one, you have seen them all [...] *Saying Grace* immanates in a certain painting *and* in these others, so that looking at one of them does not free you of the obligation to look at the others (Genette, 1997a, 172).

Here, the question arises of whether the case studies' various set of prints has a relationship of artistic equivalence or of artistic complementarity with each other. In other words, should the versions be considered the same by overlooking the material and aesthetic differences? Or are the various prints supplementary and, in order obtain exhaustive knowledge of the work, should all the versions be seen and studied? These questions remain open to debate, but it is my opinion that a conservator needs to examine all the existing versions as much as possible. An art historian will also probably need to compare the various versions as well as a specialist in photographic materials and techniques. By seeing and studying a number of versions, these specialists will decode, date, and reconstruct as far as possible, and they will critically interpret the creating process of a plural artwork. For a less specialized viewer, one version will probably suffice and there will be no need to study all the different stages of the creating process.

By looking and studying the material and technical characteristics, conservators are able to gather clues and, together with other specialists, formulate conclusions.[90] Every difference in material and technique will lead to other clues and therefore to other conclusions. On the one hand, the examination of just one of the versions will give a partial understanding of the artwork and the knowledge will be limited to just that specific photograph. On the other hand, by considering the various prints as complementary, standing next to each other, and therefore regarding the case studies as works with plural immanence, the complexity of the work and its creating process is retained.

[90] It should be noted that visual inspection is just one the first steps in the material artefacts' assessment and a great range of scientific analyses also exist. Conservators in collaboration with conservation scientists can perform non-invasive, non-destructive, and destructive analysis on small samples taken from the studied object or directly on the artefact itself. They can employ enhanced imaging techniques to reveal characteristics that are invisible to the naked eye. They can, by means of reconstruction, mock-ups sample, and accelerated ageing, try to predict the artefacts' behaviour in the future.

As will be discussed in chapter five, by studying the reproduction of Van Der Kaap's *Xiada (Girls' dorm) Xiamen,* the study and the attentive close examination of editioned photographic works may clash with practical obstacles, such as limited economic as well as human resources. Additionally, it might be difficult to trace all the existing versions of an editioned work and sometimes the different prints might be inaccessible for research. This insight also poses questions about the level of complementarity in limited editions of the various photographs, between each other as well as with the prints that have been reproduced at a later moment.

Some consequences of plural immanence

The existence of various versions poses questions about the boundaries that delimit a plural work. Certain versions might be regarded as a part of the work while others are not. Genette argued that there are motives or factors, "induced [by] prevailing usage, to regroup a certain number of non-identical objects and call them 'the same work'" (Ibid., 204). Depending on the type of work and the way it is produced, different criteria might be required in order to set the limits of the work. For the artworks under study, two factors are, in my opinion, necessary and must be taken into account. The first factor is what Genette called 'identity of mode' and this concerns, for example, that two versions are the same type of work, like two paintings and not a painting and a drawing, or two novels and not a novel and a play. The second factor is the 'genetic identity' and it implies that the various versions should be conceived and produced by or under the supervision of the same author.

If the works under study are regarded as works with plural immanence, this entails that the works are formed by the totality of the various versions. When a new version substitutes the previous one, the material characteristics and qualities of the various versions become part of a greater whole. In this sense, the "work with plural immanence does not consist in each object of its immanence, but in their totality" (Ibid., 210). Consequently, the knowledge about this type of work is not restricted to the microscopic level of the clues and the singular history of each individual version, but it is formed by the totality of the group. By acknowledging the possibility of plural immanence, this insight moves away from the assumption of a single artwork, whose material condition reveals simultaneously its identity as well as the artist's intent, towards a more complex relationship among the parts, where each version stands alone but is simultaneously related to the others, and the sum of the parts form the artwork's totality.

Plurality is thus limited to the versions made during the artist's life and therefore posthumous reproductions will be not included in the plural immanence of the studied works. The criterion of genetic identity (same author) leaves a substantial mark when

defining if a reproduction should be regarded as a version or as a faithful copy made by a copyist, working without the direct involvement of the artist. In this reading, the artwork's moment of completion is not fixed, but rather it evolves until the artist's death. The 'restriction' derived from the genetic identity has deep repercussions on the care of these objects. According to this view, the reproduction of photographic artworks should occur under the artist's direct supervision. Subsequently, reproduced works after the artist's death cannot be considered as 'legitimate' substitutions of a damaged exemplar by a pristine version; instead, they should be regarded as copies, which are not part of the plural work.

This reading implies that the so-called freeze frame paradigm traditionally used in conservation is stretched over time. In this view, a certain degree of change is allowed, determined by the artist during his or her life. Conservators can embrace change according to these given boundaries and the freezing of artwork occurs after the creation of the latest version. This implies that the conservative parameters, generally used for display and long-term storage of photographic material, do apply and should be respected for all the various versions. Plurality of immanence is not a licence to reproduce over and over the same image; it is bound to criteria and the preservation precautions are as strict as for other photography materials – also because the replication of multiple autographic artworks is just one of the possible options. The artist may choose to reprint his of her work, but he or she may also decide not to reproduce it. Moreover, as the totality of a plural work is formed by the various versions, each of them should be kept and the same degree of care applied.

Plurality also raises questions about relational hierarchy. Is each version the same? Is one version considered better or worthier than the rest? In his book, Genette does not deal with this question. He saw the totality of the versions as 'the work'. It should, however, be recognized that in visual arts it is common usage and practice to give predominance to the first version in time.[91] Generally, greater artistic and

[91] A hierarchical attitude within the art production is widespread in Western culture. Already from the fifteenth century onwards, a different appreciation existed between the various versions of an artwork made within a painter's studio. According to De Marchi and Van Miergroet, a *principaal*, a work that is not a copy, is more expensive than a copy done by the artist himself (1994, 451–464). On the other hand, in studying the workshop practice of Pieter Breughel the Younger (1564–1636), Currie and Allart state that the words *princepael* and *origineel* covered a conceptual field, whose boundaries were still undefined. These two terms were associated with the excellence of the work and especially about its execution. The two authors also add that it would be tempting to add the connotation of *inventio*, the creative impulse behind the work, but from the written sources it is not certain that "this factor conditioned common judgment and weighed on distinctions made in the marketplace" (Currie and Allart 2012, 68). For further readings on the various values given to paintings in the seventeenth century in the Netherlands and the different scholarly views on this issue see Tummers and Jonckheere 2009.

often economic value is given to the one version that has originated as the first in the creative process. The art market tends to recognize greater commercial and economic importance to so-called vintage photographs, subsequently to lifetime prints, and, lastly, posthumous ones. When more than one version exists, as often occurs in time-based media and installations, conservators, together with other stakeholders, and where possible with the artist, try to define what the artwork's constitutive and contingent elements are. Furthermore, they tend to establish which version should be considered the representative model and reference for future installations. Often, the first version is considered archetypal but, just as frequently, successive reiterations might also become the *exemplum* to follow. When a model is selected for future presentations a hierarchy among the versions is established. Practical and financial constraints as well as culturally driven processes often dictate the prevalence given to one version over others. Yet, as a note of caution, the predominance of a version might undermine the notion of artworks' plural immanency. Plurality of immanence has been proposed here as a theoretical instrument that can help conservators in dealing with photographic artworks that have been reproduced. Defining boundaries and criteria may assist conservators in outlining what is a 'legitimate' version and what is not. It provides insight into which preservation approach should be followed and pursued.

To summarize, the main purpose of chapter two has been to problematize the concept and the practice of reproduction. Employing Genette's and Ginzburg's theoretical frameworks drew attention to the tension and discomfort conservators may feel when material characteristics are considered to be too small to be recognized.[92] It was also proposed to use the notion of plural work for photographic artworks existing in more than one version, in order to avoid the hierarchical characterization of original and subsequent copies. Moreover, this view may be helpful for the appreciation and acknowledgement of material differences among various versions. The following chapters will provide more detail about the conservation history of the four case studies. They will examine why the reproduction was initiated and who was involved in the process. They will look into the (material) differences of the various versions. But, above all, these conservation histories will reveal how decision-making is the result of a working process with no pre-definite choices. It is rather the outcome of shifting views on what a photographic artwork is and the practice of reproduction.

[92] This tension was recognizable during the symposium 'Uniques and Multiples' organized by the ICOM-CC Photographic Material Working Group (PMWG) The majority of the speakers were photograph conservators and they had ethical questions about the reproduction of unique photographic works.