



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

The situative portrait

Ijken, J. van

Citation

Ijken, J. van. (2025, November 5). *The situative portrait*.
Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4282170>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning
inclusion of doctoral thesis in the
Institutional Repository of the
University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4282170>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

PROPOSITIONS

1. Photographic portraits are incomplete documents of a social situation.
2. Sitters are not passive objects but self-aware participants, yet their influence is routinely ignored when portraits' constructed nature is overlooked.
3. Sitters do not reveal themselves to the camera; they actively conceal. In front of the lens, they are hiding.
4. The photographer's gesture in making a portrait resembles that of a tinkerer more than a hunter.
5. Photographic portraits are 'signs of absence,' pointing to what is invisible and missing.
6. Photographic portraiture's historical and enduring role as a tool of identification fosters the conflation of representation with identification.
7. When perceiving photographic portraits, people should be aware of the constructed nature of portraits instead of treating them as windows on the world.
8. Photography's strength lies not in capturing reality but in failing to do so. Its value is in the endless, imperfect attempt at reproduction.

9. Comprehension of an image requires more than just looking. It requires the acknowledgment that the image is made and preferably also an understanding of how it is made.
10. Emotion recognition enacts the revival of physiognomic thinking, echoing discredited racist pseudoscience under the guise of algorithmic objectivity.
11. As photographic portraits serve surveillance, critique extends beyond art and becomes a societal necessity.
12. We must radically rethink our naive engagement with images or risk becoming involuntary actors in an algorithmic spectacle where machines determine how we are seen and who we are.