

Phenomenology of the Human Existence in Photography

(Artistic Experiment)

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Abstract

Photography in the contemporary time considers a vital, important, rich, and meaningful element which certainly influenced the concept of artistic and philosophical photograph due to the rapid development in technology and communication methods which should be accompanied by the theoretical development that paves the way for the photographic concept and analyzes its various relationships.

This study seeks to explore an important practical theoretical aspect, which called the phenomenological philosophy, whereas this modern, broad, and open philosophy is at the same time a coherent approach that can be implemented on the photograph and therefore it's possible to find a clear philosophical position concerned about photography. The photograph here isn't understood as only a configurable content, and the form can't be separated from the content in this context, but the analysis of the image depends on its full existence and continued presence launching from the things that were actually given, and depending on an intentional and conscious action to reach the truth that is represented in the art itself. Therefore, it's possible to say that implementation of the Phenomenological approach in the photography will make the existing and perceptual image or picture opens up continuously and overflows with the meaning as a result of meditation and perception.

Keywords: Art, Photography, Aesthetics, Philosophy, Phenomenology

Introduction

The photograph is an expression of the actual entities in reality and it's a look at the invisible, the openness on existence, and the unveiling of the truth. Therefore, photograph is a predictable and multi-meaningful visual work, and to illustrate that research includes a photographic artistic experiment that demonstrates how to implement the Phenomenological Approach in order to understand a photograph, where it consider like the scientist who speaks the hidden components of existence.

The case we are talking about here is a phenomenological one. The photograph takes control over actual existence and exists completely according to the phenomenological scale, and as a result the picture indicates an existing connotation but it takes another presence in the picture frame. This presence summarizes a lot and gives us multiple possibilities of interpretation.

Artwork within the framework of Phenomenology is the basis for reaching a phenomenological philosophy concerned with the art. The connection between phenomenology and art is the crucial point of contact here therefore Phenomenology is the philosophy of openness, the broad approach that meditates the appearance of objects and subjects, as well as the awareness away from assumptions and presumptions whereas Phenomenology examine the experiences as an awareness and recognize it.

The fact that the artwork is considered a basis doesn't mean that we are looking at the artwork as a single unit but we are looking at it in the relationships that exist in it, and these relationships are represented through the creative artist's experience and through the receiver's experiences. Therefore, the experience here plays an important role in the way artwork exists and the way it received. The artwork of physicist has taken on a new place in existence by bringing up a subject that has been already existed in order to make the artwork appears perfect in front of us and also gives it relative stability. The emergence of artwork as an existing entity was headed by the artist's experience and observation, and intends to make a certain subject devoted into an artwork.

Therefore, a photograph is a representation of the physical subject that exists in reality; but at the same time it's a new existence that we experience through seeing the presence. Roman Ingarden (1893-1970) says about this: "the artwork in terms of its structure and properties extends beyond its physical foundations, i.e. beyond the real "thing" that supports its existence, even if the properties of base material isn't related to the characteristics of artwork which is based on this foundation. The artwork is the real subject which the creative artist directs his/her actions toward its formulation, while the formulation of its foundation becomes a secondary process that belongs to the same artwork that should be attracted into existence by the artist". ¹

This means the artwork before us is an intentional structure that is based on the artist's vision of Merlobonti's concept, which means that my body that is part of this world is viewer, and visible and therefore, "my eyes are a certain power to attain things and not a screen to reflect things. My eyes' relationship with the object isn't perceived by me in the form of a geometric reflection of something in the eye but as a special effect of my eyes on the object. This effect remains blurred on one side and becomes more accurate and clearer whenever I focus on the object of the other side". ²

Certainly, the vision of artist in photography becomes interrelated with the world and also with the creativity of picture. Therefore, the artwork becomes distinguished by the realistic presence that artist intended where its structure was reduced by opening up to the phenomenology of art. Ingarden emphasizes: "The distinguishing feature of each artwork is that it's not the type of thing that is totally specific from all directions. In other words, the artwork involves distinct gaps that shape it and this called graphic creativity. In addition, the components of artwork keep active, and only some of it stays hidden. Accordingly, artwork requires another factor that exists outside of it represented in the observing person in order to make it observable, from my standpoint". ³

¹ Roman Ingarden from Artistic and Aesthetic Values, In the Journal of Aesthetics, Vol.4, No3 quoted by: Said Tawfiq, Aesthetic Experience, Study in the Philosophy of Phonetic Beauty, Egyptian-Lebanese House, i1, 2015, p. 330

² Maurice Merlobonti, Phenomenological, translation: Fouad Shaheen, Arab Development Institute, p. 230

³ Said Tawfiq, Aesthetic Experience, Study in the Philosophy of Photonic Beauty, Egyptian-Lebanese House, I1, 2015, p. 333

Photography & Technology

By analyzing the photography, the accomplished photograph needs graphical creativity in order to achieve its actual existence as a self-contained artwork. This graphical creativity requires the artist's presence and awareness of the perceived subject matter, and also requires a tool to achieve this goal of photograph completeness. This way technology becomes a necessity due to its ability to transform reality into an accomplished artwork.

In photography, the tool we are talking about is the (Camera) where without it we can't record the scene. The tool here is a means to an end and it considers the method to combine and unite the processes in order to achieve the existence of a photographic artwork. The object can only become an artwork by redoing it and bringing it through the camera. Heidegger explains this perfectly in his book (Technique, Truth, and Existence) and in his opinion "bringing about the presence of everything that appears in the production process. Production transforms the entity from a state of disappearance to a state of non-disappearance and then it will be existed and presented. This act of production can't be performed unless the entity is transformed from a state of appearance to a state of disappearance leading it to become uncovered." ⁴

Heidegger thought about the relationship of technology and exposure responding by saying "that they meet in everything because every production finds its basis in the exposure". ⁵ Therefore, the technology isn't only a tool to achieve the goal of recording the scene only; but it also becomes an area of openness and exposure of the object, and the artist path to the truth. Here, it should be noted that reproducing the subject doesn't mean re-introducing its elements in a constructive or synthetic manner that illustrate the characteristics of the physical relationship between these elements (such as shape, color, size, and texture), but it means to present these overlapping elements to lead us towards the invisible. Therefore, the crucial point in technology doesn't lie in actions

⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Technology-Truth-Presence*, Translation: Mohamed Spila & Abdulhadi Miftah, Arab Cultural Center, p. 52

⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Technology-Truth-Presence*, Translation: Mohamed Spila & Abdulhadi Miftah, Arab Cultural Center, p. 52

and uses neither in the use of means but in the exposures mentioned above where technology is production in the sense of exposure rather than in the sense of manufacture". ⁶

It's possible to say that photographic artwork is the intentional product of artist's vision that spread around the world as a result of artist's awareness of the things that goes around him or her, as it achieves the existence that establishes an active meeting with the recipient through exposure. "But this exposure doesn't happen easily and isn't lost in the infinite, but it reveals itself in its own twisted and various ways, and it reveals itself by directing it and controlling it. This same orientation is guaranteed and certain. Directing and guaranteeing (toward orientation) are the main features of exposure that is based on motivation". ⁷

This incitement/ motivation drive the recipient to discover the possibilities of embedded/ hidden meaning in the artwork. Incitement "is like signs or indications that lead the observer to the underlying or the implicit intention of the artwork, and inviting him/ her to perform the process of assigning the work according to the intentions contained in it. Therefore, if it re-establishes the work, it does so as if it were subject to or under the influence of certain inspirations from the work itself, and as if responding, if we use Heidegger's term to "appeals to artwork". ⁸

It's not the camera here that instigates itself but rather it allows for incitement by presenting the subject and making it exposed. The camera shows the subject and makes it visible and presents it to the recipient. As a result, "modern technology puts humans on the way; this exposure which in a clearly unconscious manner makes reality becomes a repository". ⁹

Therefore, we are talking about "a series of existence levels characterized by comprehensive and visual wrap on a particular visual entity where it's multiplied/

⁶ Martin Heidegger, Technology-Truth-Presence, Translation: Mohamed Spila & Abdulhadi Miftah, Arab Cultural Center, p. 54

⁷ Martin Heidegger, Technology-Truth-Presence, Translation: Mohamed Spila & Abdulhadi Miftah, Arab Cultural Center, p. 58

⁸ Said Tawfiq, Aesthetic Experience, Study in the Philosophy of Photonic Beauty, Egyptian-Lebanese House, II, 2015, p. 335

⁹ Martin Heidegger, Technology-Truth-Presence, Translation: Mohamed Spila & Abdulhadi Miftah, Arab Cultural Center, p. 69

exaggerated and recorded".¹⁰ This sense of belonging isn't arbitrary or random and characterized by its freedom that simply returns to the act of vision. "The vision is made when a particular visible entity spin on the entire entity, and swings around the part that it's a piece of it; or when it suddenly finds itself surrounded by other entities".¹¹ Therefore, the visionary process is the freedom of the artist and the recipient to open up to the artwork, and also the freedom of the artwork itself to be exposed to both the artist and the recipient.

"Therefore, freedom prevails that all of it is free, illuminated, and exposed. The act of exposure and truth discovery happened when freedom unites with the closest and most intimate photograph connections".¹² In other words, freedom becomes the circle of attention when the one who is looking and the one who is being looked at move in the artwork's field.

We conclude from the above that technology is the medium that leads to the truth in the art of photography, where the tool gives us the subject that has the potential to be exposed and "every fate of exposure is produced from a granted act, due to the fact that only this act carry for human being this part of exposure and that occurrence of the exposure leaves the existent present and preserve it. In that way, humans are therefore driven to their organism or entity and preserving it where in their own peculiarity the truth is destined to happen. The things that would be granted and sent in all direction to be exposed are those things that would be saved since the latter enable humans to contemplate the dignity of their organism or entity and live in it"¹³.

If the tool here is the one that gives us this exposure through the artist vision and through the intended structure of the artwork, then the photography art is the savior of humans, and their inciter and motivator (artist-recipient) to respond to the question and calls of truth in the artwork, and even with this interaction humans would contemplate and

¹⁰ Maurice Merlobonti, *The Visual & Invisible*, Translation: Suad Khader, Public Cultural Affairs House, Baghdad, 1987, p. 108

¹¹ Maurice Merlobonti, *The Visual & Invisible*, Translation: Suad Khader, Public Cultural Affairs House, Baghdad, 1987, p. 127

¹² Martin Heidegger, *Technology-Truth-Presence*, Translation: Mohamed Spila & Abdulhadi Miftah, Arab Cultural Center, p. 70

¹³ Martin Heidegger, *Technology-Truth-Presence*, Translation: Mohamed Spila & Abdulhadi Miftah, Arab Cultural Center, p. 81

meditate their own entities through the reality reserve that represented in the artwork or photography picture. Therefore, "the opposite of all that is expected when technological entity includes in itself the possibility that all things, which have been saved would show on the top or horizon."¹⁴

Scene recording: from the perceptible to the expressed:

It's now clear that understanding the artistic creativity system will only be through our engagement in the world and our attachment and coherence to things where "the real truth must expand from the two ideas of vision or sensation into perception as a structure of a subject."¹⁵ This can be explained by returning to Mikel Duffrene (1910-1995) where Duffrene agreed with Merlobonti on the perceptual recognition issue through his book "Phenomenology Aesthetic Experience", but we found that Duffrene crowns the efforts of Heidegger and Merlobonti by drawing up an important lines for the implementation of phenomenological approach and he emphasizes the embedded meaning of artwork and tries to reach that meaning through the steps that adhere to the phenomenology standards which emphasizes the coherence of our relationships with the world.

We can say that Duffrene adheres to the philosophical framework set by Merlobonti, but at the same time he analyzes, plans, and deepens the artistic and aesthetic philosophical project where he agrees implicitly with Merlobonti's wording in the book "Phenomenological Cognition or Perception" when he said "the space is existential, and we could also say that existence is space where it's for an internal necessity opens up to a certain "outside", therefore we can talk about a mental space which is the world of semantics or interpretations and the intellectual topics that formulate in it"¹⁶. It's our existence in the world and the presence of our perceptual entity which begins with our

¹⁴ Martin Heidegger, Technology-Truth-Presence, Translation: Mohamed Spila & Abdulhadi Miftah, Arab Cultural Center, p. 81

¹⁵ Maurice Merlobonti, Phenomenological, translation: Fouad Shaheen, Arab Development Institute, p. 241

¹⁶ Maurice Merlobonti, Phenomenological, translation: Fouad Shaheen, Arab Development Institute, p. 240-241

perceptual recognition that will enable us to dig or participate in the meanings of the artwork or respond to the calls of artwork; as the expression of Heidegger. However, the difference here reside in the fact that Duffrene links the aesthetic aspect with the artwork as its objective cornerstone and despite the fact that perceptual recognition is associated with the aesthetic topic, but the aesthetic topic isn't subject to the act of perception, but is associated with the art work as a realistic and existing objective entity or organism. In this regard, Duffrene says: "The aesthetic aspect or topic is nothing but an artwork that is self-perceptive"¹⁷, and with the fact that artwork is the basis of aesthetic theme or topic, also the aesthetic theme achieves itself through the artwork, and this another indication that implementation of the phenomenological approach in the art is solely based on the artwork itself.

The thing that excites us in Duffrene's analysis of the aesthetic experience is the structure of aesthetic subject itself, where "Duffrene analyzes the structure of aesthetic topic into three elements that are arranged in a Hierarchical order (according to its occurrence in perception), which start with the sensible or perceptible, followed by the embodied subject or meaning, and then the expression. There is no doubt that these elements have an independent presence from the cognition, due to its inherent in the structure of artwork itself and for that reason its possible to study it separately away from its association with the recognition or perception"¹⁸, but the thing that we want here is the connection between these elements within the artist perception and then its association as an aesthetic theme or topic that is recognized by the recipient.

On one hand, the fusion or coherence with the world that Merlobonti emphasizes allow the artist to deal with the tangible objects or things, then turn them into subjects loaded with the meanings and connotations or semantics due to the artistic expression and on the other hand, the convergence or coherence with the world allows the recipient to deal with the artwork as a subject or topic that is aesthetic, perceptible, recognizable, and rich with the expressive connotations where Merlobonti; in most of his works indicate that "art is an expressive process, and even it awakens our hidden potential for

¹⁷Said Tawfiq, Aesthetic Experience, Study in the Philosophy of Photonic Beauty, Egyptian-Lebanese House, I1, 2015, p. 255

¹⁸ Said Tawfiq, Aesthetic Experience, Study in the Philosophy of Photonic Beauty, Egyptian-Lebanese House, I1, 2015, p. 262

expression."¹⁹ Therefore, the first episode in the art expression series is the return to the perceptible or sensible in the world; but how would be the artist's relationship with the perceptible? And how does the artist transform this perceptible into an aesthetic topic that is embodied in the artwork?

Merlobonti says "on one hand it's enough to see something in order to identify the way to go after it and catch up with it, even if I don't know the way its perform in the nervous system, where my moving body belongs to the visual world and will be part of it, therefore I will be able to direct it and control it in the visual and on the other hand, it's also right that vision is related to the movement where we only see what we are looking at. What would be the vision without any movement of the eyes, and how the things doesn't spoil the eyes' movement if the movement itself is truly reflected, or blind, and doesn't have its own means of sensing, its foresight, and if the vision wasn't racing in it? All my movements are mainly drawn or pictured in the corner of the scene that I see and are transmitted into the visual map where all I see; in fact are within my reach or at least within my vision or view and transmitted on a map which is what I can do. Each of these maps is complete or complements each other, and that mean the visual world and the world of my moving projects are all comprehensive parts of the same existence."²⁰

Therefore, everything I see in the visual world is tangible and sensible to me and I can transfer this sensible thing to another world represented in the world of artwork. The perceptible here Isn't the arbitrator that highlights the artwork and enables it to show up at a given moment, but the perceptible is the reality that embodied in the artwork or the artwork itself. As a result, the perceptible will have another power by moving toward the world of artistic work which will take many ways to establish the work structure and its topic. However, I am not associated with this perceptible as a result of my participation only, but as a result of a noticeable and careful special situation and this attitude determines the perceived characteristic. "This characteristic appears whenever I turn toward my own vision, instead of giving up on my entire view of the world and

¹⁹ Mohamed Ben Sabba, Transformations of Contemporary Phenomenology (Merlobonti in the Husserl and Heidegger Debate), First Edition, 2015, p. 244

²⁰ Merlobonti, The Eye and Mind, Translation: Habib Al-Sharoni, Knowledge Facility, p. 17

I wonder what I am seeing exactly; since it's not present in the natural visual interaction with the world. It's the answer to a particular question by my vision and a result of a second or critical vision that works to identify itself in its specificity and as a result of "focusing the attention on the pure vision"²¹. It's the position or situation that makes me get in touch with the perceptible in the visual field, therefore I will be able to show the influencing components that will have the attraction element in the artwork.

"As a result, the importance of perceptible as an element that has supremacy or sovereignty, in a way that makes perception under the control of aesthetic subject, since the task of determined person (the connoisseur), as well as the task of executor (who displays the artwork) is to show the aesthetic perceptible, but not to dominate over it or control it. Proclamation of the perceptible means showing the artwork as an aesthetic topic, where the perceptible is an indispensable element of the aesthetic subject or the appearance of artwork). This means, interchangeably that artwork needs to the perceptible as a necessary element in order to be able to go beyond itself to the aesthetic subject by demonstrating this perceptible or connecting it and making it present. Therefore, Duffrene says emphasizing the main idea in his research which shows clearly the influence of Merlobonti on him "What can't be replaced, which is the essence of artwork is the perceptible or recognizable that will be delivered only through its presence."²²

It's the artist's experience with the perceptible that transform him or her to represent or embodied the meaning in the artwork, where this "experience euphoria is the one that makes any perception a recognition of specific thing"²³, therefore the experiment provides or creates an extension between the perceptible and the embedded semantics. "Whenever the perceptible acquires special methods it will take meaning of it and that meaning is necessary due to the fact that perceptible can't be understood if it was just a mess or clutter, if the sounds were just noise and if the words are mere shouts."²⁴

²¹ Maurice Merlobonti, *Phenomenological*, translation: Fouad Shaheen, Arab Development Institute, p. 191

²² Said Tawfiq, *Aesthetic Experience, Study in the Philosophy of Photonic Beauty*, Egyptian-Lebanese House, I1, 2015, p. 263

²³ Maurice Merlobonti, *Phenomenological*, translation: Fouad Shaheen, Arab Development Institute, p. 70

²⁴ Said Tawfiq, *Aesthetic Experience, Study in the Philosophy of Photonic Beauty*, Egyptian-Lebanese House, I1, 2015, p. 265

Therefore, the artistic experience is a definition of visual scene in the overall vision horizon "the true artwork isn't elegantly rhyme with the life context as a mere ornament or decoration, but is flare up according to its own account, and as a result it always presents itself as something; like a call"²⁵. In the case of photographer, it's not possible to record the scene without identifying the perceptible vision field and concentrating on the subject that needed to be evoked and embodied.

This will be done by keeping "the ocean masked so I can see the thing better and lose in depth what I win in the photo or image since seeing the thing means diving into it, and that things inhabit a system where one of it can't stand out without hiding other things. More specifically, the inner horizon of the thing can't become a subject without the surrounding objects become a horizon, where vision is a two-sided act."²⁶

Merlobonti explains this issue by saying "Whenever a camera; in a film focuses on specific thing and approaches it to film it in a bigger way, at that time we can remember that this thing is an ashtray or a person's hand where we don't really mean it since the screen that film displayed on it has no horizon, "On the contrary, in regard to the sight or eyewink I direct my vision toward part of the recovered and expanded scene, but the other things draw back and fall into hibernation, but it stay here where the thing that I am focusing on right now falls within the horizon of other things and will be exposed to the minor vision, just like the rest of things that are at my reach. Therefore, it's the horizon that secures the identity of thing during the exploration and it's the inseparable with the near-power which my eyes hold on the things that were reviewed and the vision that focus on the new details that will be discovered."²⁷

Here, we find that Merlobonti deals with the issue of vision in terms of the skilled artist and the recipient who reads the artwork. Primarily, the artist's mission is selecting the subject by vision, which may "advance at the moment as if it was a spark of lightning, but then we have to own it since it becomes ours by expression."²⁸ Whenever I stare at

²⁵ Hans Gadamer, *The Beautiful Manifestation*, Edit: Robert Bernasconi, Translation and Commentary: Said Tawfiq, Supreme Council of Culture, National Translation Project, 1997, p. 323

²⁶ Maurice Merlobonti, *Phenomenological*, translation: Fouad Shaheen, Arab Development Institute, p. 68

²⁷ Maurice Merlobonti, *Phenomenological*, translation: Fouad Shaheen, Arab Development Institute, p. 68

²⁸ Maurice Merlobonti, *Phenomenological*, translation: Fouad Shaheen, Arab Development Institute, p. 152

a subject, I put aside all what in the horizon and examine the subject that stands out since its an artistic one where "the vision is the entrance to the world of creatures that stand out which may only stand out if it were able to hide behind each other or behind me. In other words, looking at the thing or viewing it means throwing yourself into it and from there all things will be confronted according to the direction or destination I am running for",²⁹ but at the same time my vision of the subject is an opened and extended communication between the thing and I, since the artistic experience at the end reveals the relationship between my body and the things that exist in the world, and also my examination of the subject opens up an expression cycle where my staring vision of things is the primary condition of possible expression.

"The expression, as Duffrene says, is the perceptible face when turning towards me, it will be present through it, and it's an understanding through the attendance due to the fact that anything the aesthetic subject tells me about, it will tell it through its perceptible presence. In this case, I will not have interest or concern about the outside world and I will give myself away to the experience that was offered to me and to the perceptible which naturally is capable of saying something else that could be the highest image or photo of meaning whenever the perceptible elements come together in an expressive unit,"³⁰ where "Expression is a particular characteristics or methods which as Henri Bergson (1851-1941) showed us don't give their selves to the analysis and authorship, "just as we are the humans can't identify those precise patterns that establish a person's unique style, we also can't separate those special patterns that establish an expression of an artwork."³¹

Even though we can't determine the type of artistic expression in photography, we are convinced the expression is impervious in the thing that has been expressed, since "the expression is creative in any field and the thing that has been expressed isn't always separated from it."³² , and through the expression, the subject becomes encapsulated in

²⁹ Maurice Merlobonti, *Phenomenological*, translation: Fouad Shaheen, Arab Development Institute, p. 68

³⁰ Said Tawfiq, *Aesthetic Experience, Study in the Philosophy of Photonic Beauty*, Egyptian-Lebanese House, I1, 2015, p. 268

³¹ Said Tawfiq, *Aesthetic Experience, Study in the Philosophy of Photonic Beauty*, Egyptian-Lebanese House, I1, 2015, p. 269

³² Maurice Merlobonti, *Phenomenological*, translation: Fouad Shaheen, Arab Development Institute, p. 317

the artistic framework that guarantees it to live again in front of the recipient, where "the perceptible aesthetic expression since it expresses the existence in itself, it is in a place in nature as recognized thing that all people can have access to it"³³, or its possible to say that by moving it to the world of artistic work it will become complete, achieved, and fully indicative waiting to open up to the recipient.

"The moment I prepare for the scene; as a recipient must be acknowledged as immutable where I will go after it in a way that is similar to the blind recognition that precedes the definition and mental preparation of the meaning"³⁴. The thing that trapped inside the artwork framework isn't the wide horizon that I see, where the thing I see in the artwork is a cramped subject from a certain angle, and these familiar elements to us become so equitant in a way that have its own existential character. Here we look at the thing that we know in the scene to move on and recognize it. "Whenever we identify something since it considers a thing, it certainly means that we recognize it; but in the same time knowing this thing doesn't simply mean that we will be able to identify it again after a prior knowledge where the recognition or identification is methodically different thing. Whenever something is being identified, it will therefore free itself from the specific and frequent circumstances that we have found in it before, and its a situation not related to there and then and not about here and now but its about a thing that will be met since it consider the same exact thing therefore it will begin to climb to its permanent identity and will be separated from anything that doesn't have a passing meeting."³⁵

Our encounter with the photography art gives us the opportunity to learn about the things that don't exist now in our surroundings, but it was recorded as a scene in the picture frame. The things that exist in the picture are similar to the thing we accustomed to in reality but the picture shows it through a double vision. "Every artwork remains similar to a certain thing just like it was one day as long as its existence enlightens the system as a whole and be a witness on it. This system may not be from the type that we make consistent with our perceptions of the system, but the type that one day united the familiar things that belong to a familiar world. Nevertheless, there is in every artwork

³³ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, translation: F. C. Beaumont, London: Duckworth, 1963, p. 156

³⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, translation: F. C. Beaumont, London: Duckworth, 1963, p. 158

³⁵ Hans Gadamer, *The Beautiful Manifestation*, Edit: Robert Bernasconi, Translation and Commentary: Said Tawfiq, Supreme Council of Culture, National Translation Project, 1997, p. 248

a new and powerful testimony on the spiritual energy that generates the system."³⁶ A photograph is present when it succeeds to elevate the value of the scene in an integrated artistic unit that includes things which are perceptible, representative, and expressed.

Hermeneutics visual text (Photo):

Whenever we talk about Hermeneutics visual text, we are talking about the activity we perform in our attempt to understand and interpret or explain the artwork and find its connections to arrive to its essence, where the photograph is a representation of a certain situation and this situation is a relationship between several elements that were recorded and installed inside the photograph frame, and by practicing the Hermeneutics activity we are making an attempt to understand this relationship by focusing on the image or photo and finding the extended link that will allow the detection process. The Hermeneutics that we want here is the Phonological Hermeneutics, where the interpretive act that I practice is based on the photograph data and then it will create mediation between the image or picture and I, therefore understanding and interpreting the photo becomes a self-development in the horizon of existence.

Therefore, "The Hermeneutics demonstrates above all an intellectual practice where its evidence or guide is the mechanism or art,"³⁷ and the intended art here is the action or procedure we take in an attempt to understand and interpret in order to absorb or accommodate a certain meaning related to the visual text. The interpretation or Hermeneutic is the action I do to identify the artwork and pierce the semantics or indications to rediscover the meanings, which the way that indicate my existence to deepen my experience of the world.

The purpose of phenomenological approach and interpretation or hermeneutic is clear now, where both of them are represented in "making the thing in question reveal itself and show its face. If the "approach" involves a form of accountability that opens up one

³⁶ Hans Gadamer, *The Beautiful Manifestation*, Edit: Robert Bernasconi, Translation and Commentary: Said Tawfiq, Supreme Council of Culture, National Translation Project, 1997, p. 221

³⁷ Hans Jadamir, *Philosophy of Interpretation*, Translation: Mohammed Shawky Al-Zain, Arab House of Sciences, Al-Ikhtilaf Publications, Arab Center, I2, 2006, p. 61

aspect of the thing, the dialectic interpretation or hermeneutic opens itself up to the questions of the thing and accepts to be the one responsible, not the questioner and therefore the thing it encounters can reveal itself and its special existence. Jadamar says the thing makes this possible is the "linguistic" of human understanding (the linguistic nature of understanding) and in fact the "linguistic" of the existence itself."³⁸

The art work is a comprehensive linguistic structure and the language is a human existence pattern, and it's even possible to say that "we are immersed in the language"³⁹ and the language is also the melting pot where the meanings of existence fuse or melt in it and manifested in its beautiful forms. Rollan Bart describes the language as "the transferable value to the value of luxurious indication"⁴⁰. Language is revealing or as Heidegger expressed "the language speaks existence." and Language isn't the things that human speaks, where human being isn't the one who speaks or says the language but the language speaks through the human and since language is the domain of understanding and interpretation, the world reveals itself through the language of understanding and interpretation. It doesn't mean that man understands the language but understands and interprets through the language. Whenever Heidegger says that language "Speaks existence" he also means that it speaks the human existence just like the individual possessions, where the human existence and Al-Onteaqeah existence, or the "objects or things in existence" are similar to fragments of existence or Manchurian rays of this presence or existence that shines in the language."⁴¹

Here, it's possible to describe the artwork as a speaker of existence, and the photography is an elaborate language that gives us the possibility of understanding the human existence through our coexistence with the direct facts, which are compound data or facts and made up of a forefront facts as an artistic subject, and also from the facts that were given to me through myself. The synchronization between the artwork facts and

³⁸ Adel Mustafa, *The Understanding of Understanding (Entrance to Hermeneutic)*, Rouya for Publishing and Distribution, Cairo, 2007, p. 281

³⁹ Roland Bart, *The Pleasure of Text*, Translation: Munther Ayachi, Center for Civilization Development, I1, 1992, p. 31

⁴⁰ Roland Bart, *The Pleasure of Text*, Translation: Munther Ayachi, Center for Civilization Development, I1, 1992, p. 15

⁴¹ Said Tawfiq, *Aesthetic Experience, Study in the Philosophy of Photonic Beauty*, Egyptian-Lebanese House, I1, 2015, p. 123

the facts that were given to me to strengthen my openness on the world. I take a certain place in the world since I am able to see others and also the others can see me, and my experiences are my active presence as a result of my engagement and involvement in the world. While the artwork is a complex flood of semantics or indications, I am also a mass of indications that share to differentiate between the expression and the thing that has been expressed. The expression in the photographic scene is the skill of artist to records the scene in certain circumstances, and it's the shared formation, the lightening, the perspective, and the selection and distribution of elements, in addition to my ability to distinguish the expression as soon as I am present in front of the artwork. The thing that has been expressed is a continuation of reality existence at work and a flow of meaning between me and the exposure and openness of work.

Therefore, we agreed that the interpretation of artwork requires our active, free and deliberate presence to achieve the compatibility and amalgamation in the world and this active presence can be defined as the "belonging", which means that interpretation of the photograph that start from the image or photo itself should have an understandable reference of the photo's topic itself, and means "the heritage elements in the interpretive historical behavior, where the interpretation art should start with the issue that understanding is the existence in its relationship with the same thing that appears with the heritage and through it where the "thing" can connect with me. In addition, whoever achieves an interpretive understanding has to ensure that our relationship with the "things" isn't a spontaneous relation without raising some problems."⁴²

The heritage here means the accumulation of my experiences and expertise related to my temporal body or physical cohesion in the world where my reading of the artwork elements makes me belong to familiar things in the real life, which in turn exceeds the temporal present. My belonging to the world topics and my active presence makes my perception of these topics a free transition between the time situations, where "I connect with time in the "field of presence" in its broadest sense. This moment that I spend at work, with the horizon of passing day back of it and the horizon of evening and night

⁴² Hans Jadamar, *Philosophy of Interpretation*, Translation: Mohammed Shawky Al-Zain, Arab House of Sciences, Al-Ikhtilaf Publications, Arab Center, I2, 2006, p. 52

in front of it teach me how to know the course of time. The far past has also its own time system and its time frame in relation to my present but with the fact that it was present itself and was "in its time" penetrative by my life, and it had continued to this day. Whenever I recall a far past, I reopen the time and make myself focus on a certain moment where this time was still a horizon for a closed future today, and a horizon for a close past that its far today. Everything then force me into the field of presence like in the original experience where the time and its dimensions itself appear without an intermediate distance at the last instinct."⁴³

Here, I must say that familiarity with the artwork topic doesn't mean to drop the preconceptions on the artwork, where I don't judge the artwork simply by looking at it but the point here that my visual field is an "installation that I have for a certain type of experiences that once created, it can't be cancelled"⁴⁴. Therefore, its like an identification card that reminds me of the existing things in the world and grants a connection between my cognitive structure and the world, and certainly my drive or rush towards the artwork will determine the interpretation horizon for me, where my effective and definite connection with the work will establish to perform the desired interpretation or explanation.

My direct work experience reveals to me the world of artwork but my entrance into this world is the earth. That is, my entrance is the witnessed and the determined subject that I know where my sensational experience leads me to a wider horizon, and our presence and the presence of artwork become fuller. This is the idea that Merlobonti repeated in more than one place, where he stimulated the conflict idea between the world and earth from Heidegger, and formulated it by emphasizing the perceptual experience to move from the familiar world to the world of artwork. "Whenever we rejoin other's self-esteem and unity as a world, at the same time we achieve the understanding to ourselves, and whenever we understand a great artwork, our work experience interacts with our whole life form and puts our understanding of ourselves in jeopardy. It happens that we aren't the ones who are investigating the work, but the

⁴³ Maurice Merlobonti, *Phenomenological*, translation: Fouad Shaheen, Arab Development Institute, p. 336

⁴⁴ Maurice Merlobonti, *Phenomenological*, translation: Fouad Shaheen, Arab Development Institute, p. 268

work is the one investigate us and asks us its question, that is, it occupied us with the issue that has occupied it and brought it into existence."⁴⁵ It must be emphasized here that we view the artwork as a linguistic unit whose its elements are interconnected and adhere together, therefore the artwork can't be cut into form and content but its taken as a represented existence through its existence method and its presence as a medium that allows us to reach the center of work itself.

Therefore, my relationship with the artwork becomes a strong one that characterized by unity, its an interrelated relationship which makes it difficult to distinguish between the two parties where the artwork and I are both connected with a state of melting, and this what Bart expressed in his book (the pleasure of text). That is, this melting is the thing that gives us the pleasure of reading the work. Here, we find that Bart in an episode of dialectic series did extend it to connect Merlobonti with Gaston Bashlar, and this series may lead us beyond what we expect in the interpretation philosophy, where everyone in existence must understand their selves and the things around them and this understanding must necessarily includes the manifestations of living world that we achieve our existence in it. Merlobonti did talk about the relationship between (the human-the world), (the object-the thing), and (the conscious human-the imagined human), while Bart speaks about the relationship between (author-text), (author-reader), and (reader-text); therefore they both practice the philosophical questioning from the medium of existence and from the surrounding world that is mixed with the details of the past and the future, but Bashlar refers to "the nature of two dreamers, the first one looks for familiarity with humans and the second looks for familiarity with the materiality. In other words, there's only one place for the most superior elements that are hidden; hidden inside the human being and hidden inside things and belonging to the same analytical survey"⁴⁶. Here is also an indirect link to what Bart and Merlobonti call for, and the close connection with the artwork opens up possibilities for revealing what is hidden in the sides of the image. Bart approach is necessary whenever we talk about the interpretation of artwork, where the things that distinguish his philosophy is the combination of theory and practice as his work reveal a great diversity in the

⁴⁵ Adel Mustafa, *The Understanding of Understanding (Entrance to Hermeneutic)*, Rouya for Publishing and Distribution, Cairo, 2007, p. 285

⁴⁶ Gaston Bashlar, *Aesthetics of the Place*, Translation: Ghalib Halsal, I2, 1984, p. 99

implementation of his approach, and also his researches dealt with the theater, cinema, poetry, and photography. Perhaps, Bart's most notable production in the literary field is the theory of (Author death) where, Bart removes the holiness that accompanied the text author due to the fact that text value; in his opinion doesn't belong to the brilliance of creator or author but the text enters in a convergence relationship as it consider a set of existing relationships which is an existential elevation of the text value and transfer it to new horizons independent from the author's authority. This analysis has a deeper indication, where on one hand Bart's theory is broader and deeper to be reduced to the limits of literary text and on the other hand the author's death " theory is obtaining the prevailing functional dimension of the artwork which is no longer a closed product but a product of semantics or interpretations "⁴⁷.

The interpretive approach in this issue is a phenomenological approach where the issue is very complex. We certainly begin to engage in the virtual aspect of artwork but once we get familiar with the work, we begin in a state of permanent transformation, diligent understanding, and the endless inquiries to reach the continuous truth of the artwork. Bart say "Working on one meaning or meanings of the text can't be separated from the phenomenological logic, where there is no machine to read the meaning. Really, there are translation machines that now contain and will certainly contain reading machines, but if these reading machines can transform certain and literal meanings, it have no effect on other meanings of suggestive level and on the indications and breakdown of meanings in the text, where always must be at the beginning a single process of reading, since there is no possibility for the existence of a presentation with rules that formulate a system, and its not possible for a researcher to speak on behalf of another researcher. Therefore, this individual research is in a state of uncertainty and every researcher has his own history. "⁴⁸

We also agree with Bart in his definition of the narrative structural analysis, where in his opinion this analysis "doesn't make an attempt to verify the single and sole meanings of the text, but doesn't even try to prove one of the text meanings. It's a search in the

⁴⁷Ahmed Qasaissa, The Author Death Theory of Roland Bart, Master's Thesis, University of Algiers, 2008

⁴⁸ Roland Bart, Textual Analysis, Translation: Abdul Kabir Al-Sharqawi, Dar Al-Taqween, 2009, p. 24

places and possibilities for the multiplicity of meanings or the meanings as it consider multiple"⁴⁹. This definition can be dropped directly on the photograph as it consider a (indicator), where "its only possible to say that essence of (indicator) is always tangible, whether it is sounds, objects, or photos"⁵⁰, and since the indicator refers to the indication or meaning, therefore the photo is a stock that is hidden behind the meaning or indication and the interpretation will be the act of disclosure, explanation, and understanding.

The phenomenology of mirrors and human existence:

Artistic experiment:

According to the above information, we can now launch to the phenomenology of photography, taking into consideration that the phenomenological approach we want in the art shouldn't stop at the theoretical frameworks, but it must swim in the space of artwork in order to respond to the numerous questions that remain hostage to the philosophical theory. In order to move from the act of vision to real or physical vision, we must confront the artwork to get rid of any assumption or given perception and give the importunacy to our direct experience. How can we talk about the picture or photo in a phenomenological way if the picture isn't the starting point that all other axioms are focused on it?

Therefore, in alignment with my position on the phenomenology of photography art, I did an artistic experiment that involves a philosophical mission; so to speak and this experiment is a collection of four photos graphed by camera and are subject to the well-known photography techniques in terms of lighting and exposure, and also these pictures haven't been modified by the photo's editing software and its an authentic photos that are displayed just as they were taken.

These images or photos represent several cases of human existence, where I took a group of individuals' photos and then photographed it again by employing the mirror,

⁴⁹ Roland Bart, Textual Analysis, Translation: Abdul Kabir Al-Sharqawi, Dar Al-Taqween, 2009, p. 24

⁵⁰ Naseirah Issa Mubrak, The Mark Philosophy of Roland Bart (The Legend & Costume Style as a Model), Master Thesis, Hajj Lakhdar Patina University, Algeria, 2011

therefore the displayed pictures represent several dimensions, the first one is the original scene that represents the human dimension, the second dimension is a reflection of the scene in the mirror, and the third dimension is the final picture frame that contains the previous two dimensions. (See the art collection). The issue I am raising here is purely phenomenological, where the completed picture that presents the current reality is a reality of a past that was present at a certain moment and a future that will become a reality at every time we read the picture, and now it's tangible, visible, and indicant, and takes sovereignty in the actual verification.

Here, I am not discussing the beauty concept or the colorific and compositional connection issues of the photograph, and even though these connections give the picture its general character, acceptance, and familiarity but it all end with the end of perceptual act and the meaning will remain intangible or unreachable. "The picture has limits that don't belong to the depth and are separated from it, where it's stable and has a coherent color but the depth is unlimited and its color unspecified as it continues to exist behind the picture. The different parts of the whole picture like the one closest to the depth or bottom have a special meaning besides the colors and characters, where the issue will be to identify the contents of this meaning, the meaning of the words borders, sides, frames, and ends, and what will happen if we adjusted a set of attributes as a deep picture."⁵¹

The employment of mirror in this experience has several connotations or indications where the mirror has occupied an important position in the philosophical and artistic thought throughout the ages. The mirror, on the one hand is a reflection of the visual and a display of the object in front of it, and on the other hand it's a temporary existential pattern that ends with the end of display or show. Mirror also shows us the things in different dimensions and angles, and may as well reveal to us the hidden things; therefore mirror has raised a wide debate in the philosophy, engineering, psychology, and art fields.

⁵¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, translation: Foad Shaheen, Arab Development Institute, p. 27

The phenomenological aspect that we look in it at the mirror is the aspect that makes reflection of the visible in the mirror a unique and distinctive openness on the existence, as if the mirror summarized the things that have been told and the one that haven't been told, or the things that have been seen and the one that haven't been seen. "As if the smallest attracts the largest"⁵², therefore the mirror as a phenomenon can't reflect the things that don't exist in reality where the reflection necessarily depends on another visible existence. The picture here is a reproduction of what is showing in the mirror; therefore it's a full-fledged recording of the actual reality and the reflected reality. We can even say that it's a distinctive manifestation to complete the subject in an ontological way, and this is a confirmation that picture isn't just another version or copy of reality, but it's enlightenment on the existence through the reality and a reflection of this reality in the individuality or personality of each of us.

Despite the fact that mirror reflects everything that is visible, but everyone sees a different reflection as a result of their closeness, farness, or the different angle of their vision to the mirror. Likewise, the photograph is an indicative of the visual reality but this indication has the symbolism of reflection that defines to the viewers the horizon of their openness on the work. "The picture in mirror plans in things the vision work more perfectly than lights, shadows, and reflections. Mirrors just like all other artistic subjects, such as tools and signs have emerged on the open space from the viewer body to the body that has been viewed."⁵³

Consequently, the presence of mirror here is the belonging to reality and an attraction to the viewers where the mirror doesn't affect their perception of the presented subject in the picture and doesn't affect their familiarity with the existing things in the world, but the reflection of subjects in it create a relationship between the inside and the outside, and recording this reflection through the picture indicates this relationship; and therefore the picture becomes an expression material that is fully prepared to share or exchange its openness with the recipient. This indicate that the hidden or embodied meaning of photograph is the result of human practice but isn't a result of the subject's

⁵² Mahmoud Rajab, *The Philosophy of Mirror*, Dar Al-Maaref, Egypt, II, 1994, p. 164

⁵³ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Eye and Mind*, Translation: Habib Al-Sharoni, Al-Maaref Facility, Egypt, p. 22-23

size, color, and dimensions, where this isn't evidence or indication of the artwork, but the indication is the expressive value that considers the entrance to a world loaded with meanings. Therefore, reading this two-dimensional picture "is no longer entrusted to the mind of the readers who would read the effects of light; the thing on the brain, the matter or thing that they would have done if they hadn't inhabited a body before. The issue isn't related to talking about the place and the light but it's about making the existing place and the light here speaks."⁵⁴

Therefore, this artistic experience is a tangible phenomenon that represents a cognitive knowledge of the things we can recognize, and the presence of human element is also a knowledgeable tool that makes the artwork available for reviewing. The human is connected to an existential pattern where our perceptions are organized and share its visible behavioral and physical structure. Dealing with this arrangement as a phenomenon leads us directly to assume the existence of hidden meaning in the visible body of the picture and by returning to the art collection or group (see the art collection), we see that humans don't appear entirely due to their reflection inside the mirror and as a result of the photography angle or corner that has influenced the visible or perceptible, which also emphasizes the attraction of the recipients to the heart of work in order to become viewers and observable to the work and also to themselves.

The human existence here isn't an individual presence, where pictures represent a child, an old man, a girl, and a woman but it doesn't represent their individual characteristics, personal characteristics, or their behaviors. The presence of human in these images represents a thing or event similar to our existential situations and this similarity take us to complex relationships that exist behind the body as a primary indication or perception. Accordingly, the openness on the content of these images or pictures will be based on my real-world experience from one hand and my real-life experience with the subject of the picture on the other hand. This harmony is the one that take me to define my relationship with the perceptive picture, and also it will allow for the production of indication or perception.

⁵⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Eye and Mind*, Translation: Habib Al-Sharoni, Al-Maaref Facility, Egypt, p. 59

The gesture, the look, the body's movement, and the situation are all signs and indications of the values that deepen the human existence and strengthen the way of this existence in the world, and the things that we see isn't just a movement of our hands or the emotion of our features; where these are only evidences on our presence at a certain moment in time, but imagine that the look or movement of the hand itself may formulate a profound existential debate; since the human view which is represented in the picture is the key to the mystery of interpretation. This view or sight may be reprehensible, disdainful, compassionate, pitiful, meditative, remindful, dreamy, sedentary, or shy which are in all its states a prediction of the hidden things and a cohesion or bonding with our deep-rooted entity or existence in the world. The same will be with the hand movement which may be commanded, prevented, astonished, or described in our relationship with the existences and objects or things, and therefore it would be a confirmation of our close association with everything outside of our body and everything exist in our world.

My body isn't only the cover that I move with and my body parts or organs don't perform the position of physical and functional presence, but my body is relationships that intertwine or interconnect and gain its valued from its integration and fusion, and its dissolving with the things and the world.

I am in front of the photograph viewer and visible, I see it and go beyond the act of perception then it will open up in front of me to see me and to make me visible in front of myself as well, where the photos or pictures and I formulate a unique cohesive unit that refers to the richness of certainty field which is based on the perception field, practice field, awareness, and intent. I am in the world which means that I exist, and I understand myself and the other through the active presence horizon. In light of that, we can say that reading the artwork isn't an arbitrary process but a deliberate action based on the participation and interaction, and even this procedure is in conjunction with the understanding of artwork.

In this context, the artwork can't be treated as a consumer product that accepts repetition frequently and also can't be dealt with as a material, thing, or item rooted in the formal elements like color, light, and texture only but the artwork is a compound structure of

shape and content, inside and outside, and visual and invisible. The form is the initial way that takes or converts us to understand the content and interpret its arrangements which require awareness-based activities of the recipient in the world, where each new artistic perception is a new awareness and experience that corresponds with the existence method of human beings in the world.

Therefore, the value of artwork is the perceptual value which represented in revealing its existential identity, and this value doesn't appear and be revealed on its own but it show by the recipient's response to the work and the direction of this recipient towards its internal horizon in a permanent and continuous attempt to search the world and uncover the facts. The relationship between the recipient and the artwork is interconnected where each of them passes through the other through the first vision incentive or motive.

Figures:

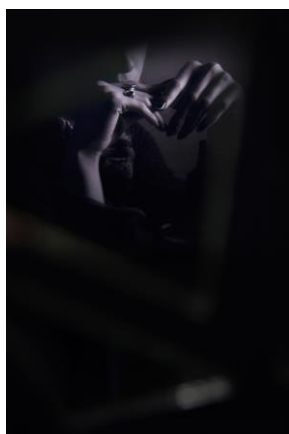


Figure (1) Artist Hanan Al Sheikh- Photography- 2018



Figure (2) Artist Hanan Al Sheikh- Photography- 2018



Figure (3) Artist Hanan Al Sheikh- Photography- 2018



Figure (4)- Artist Hanan Al Sheikh- Photography- 2018