

Jenna Bliss  
BLUE LIGHT IN THE LIVINGROOM  
February 1–March 22, 2025

It took the last century a long time to die, but on the 20th of January this year, we may have finally seen its funeral. Heralded too early by the end of the Cold War and then re-declared with force on the 11th of September 2001, totemic collapse never quite arrived and we grew used to living among the prosperous dead. The institutions of the old century became unmoored from the precepts and contracts that defined them but drifted on in a zombified form. In turn, we—as subjects, citizens, and clients—tried to reproduce inside the ever-extending terminus. Caught in a buffering loop of falling debris, an endless snuff movie without bodies.<sup>1</sup>

Representation is not the thing or its image, it is the space between the image and the thing. Neither symptom nor cause, it is efficacy and capacity. Institutions hold and separate us, communicate, and distribute our needs. Technology faces history with a Janus face. For over a hundred years photography's material base gave form to the paradoxical negativity of its technological reproduction—darkness fixed in light. The negative inherent to representation is not an absence it's a promise and at the same time a threat.<sup>2</sup> Attempts in language to describe the gap between the known and the visible risk false satiation. Pages and mouths filled with object-like words, transparent and saccharine.

Bloated by chemical intrusion, a childless woman holds another's baby in her arms and feels sorry for her. It must be hard to get everything you've ever wanted, a child to save you from your daughter-ship, a new family unit of aseptic incubation. Followed everywhere by metaphors of maternity—pregnant with hope, pregnant with fear—we abort possibility but not potential. Greed is a feminized and infantilizing vice: mommy in the kitchen picking at the chicken carcass, a toddler with their hand stuck in the cookie jar. It is unacceptable to want more than your fair share and humiliating to be denied, but in America, it's hard to know what the portion size should be.

Anyone born out of a mother ought to be able to tell you that there's no such thing as originality, but photography had two fathers and no midwife at its birth; an inverted masculine maternity.<sup>3</sup> A man in California injected himself with his son's blood, borrowing from his own creation as a downpayment against the future. The longest part of your life happens after your death and all that will remain as proof are documents: photographs, tax bills, and a passport with no body to use it. The forensic intrudes on realism, a pornography of the interior. The body is your container of experience, the document a biopsy in a petri dish. The substitution of one via the other, pure obscenity.

Alexandra Symons-Sutcliffe

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1 "And was not the attack on the World Trade Centre with regard to Hollywood catastrophe movies like snuff pornography versus ordinary sado-masochistic porno-movies?" Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (London: Verso, 2002), p.11

2 "...the paradoxical status of photography within bourgeois culture. The simultaneous threat and promise of the new medium." Allan Sekula, *The Body and the Archive* "October," vol. 39 (Winter 1986): 3–64, p.15

3 After Nicéphore Niépce's sudden death in 1833, his collaborator Louis Daguerre was awarded a patent by the French government for the first fixed chemical photo process, the daguerreotype. Niépce's son bitterly and publicly contested Daguerre's erasure of his father's contribution to the invention of photography, to little success.

Jenna Bliss (b. 1984 New York, USA) is an artist, filmmaker and video editor. She lives in New York. Her recent solo exhibitions include *Basic Cable*, Amant, New York (2024); *Jenna Bliss*, Haus am Waldsee, Berlin (2024); *FEELERS*, w. Susan Conte, Schiefe Zähne, Berlin (2022); *Homing*, Ulrik, New York City (2022); *Now vacant.*, Stadtgalerie Bern, Bern (2021); *Late Responder*, Felix Gaudlitz, Vienna (2020); *Poison The Cure*, OUTPOST, Norwich (2017); and *Day One in Step into Spring*, w. Gili Tal, Cell Project Space, London (2017). Her documentary *The People's Detox* was shown at Kunstverein München, Munich (2021), at Metrograph, New York (2020), and at Spectacle, Brooklyn (2019).

Selected group exhibitions include *New York, N. Why?*, GEMS, New York (2024); *Group show*, Podium, Oslo (2023); *Social Photography X*, Carriage Trade, New York (2022); *Der Radwechsel*, Universitätsgalerie im Heiligenkreuzerhof, Vienna (2022); *Only Reliable Narrators*, The Plumb, Toronto (2022); *This City Is*, Francesca Pia, Zurich (2021); *Jenna Bliss, Helene Fauquet, Jesper List Thomsen, Margherita Raso*, Fanta-MLN, Milan (2020); *Straying From The Line*, Schinkel Pavilion, Berlin (2019), *Cutting The Stone*, Miguel Abreu, New York (2019), *Poison The Cure*, Raven Row, London (2017), and *Nihilism and Self Care*, KW Institute, Berlin (2017).