

What do photographs want from us? Why won't they leave us alone? We create them, and they surround us, hold us captive, demand and extract psychic ransom. We allow ourselves to be overtaken by them and then wonder why we can't stop taking them, or look away. Is it because photography itself is a compulsion to repeat? With photography, we try to grasp what's ephemeral and beyond our reach, the world in all its vastness and elasticity. But why do we expect photographs to capture anything real? To yield a true reflection of what we saw, of who we were? More accurately, of what was. Because in the hazy blur of what's lost, truth inevitably comes into greater focus in the past tense.

Animated life is already gone when we blink or click the shutter. Graven yet paper-thin, this is the mythic status of photographs: They somehow allow us to hold on to time—imprinted as an image. But if the myth itself could be fixed as an image, what might come into view? We would only have to scratch its filmy emulsion to find beneath... endless centuries of encrusted emulsion, as if at the edge of our eyelids, nearly sealed while we slept.

—excerpt from *Trompe L'Oeil*, Bob Nickas, 2014

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