

2016 *A Matter of Memory*, George Eastman House, Rochester, NY

Is your personal connection to digital images the same as it is to photographic prints? If not, how is it different?

Digital images are a different species to photographic prints. Not necessarily a different entity entirely, but nonetheless, the rapidity of the encounter and the screen's homogenization renders images—our experience of them—very differently.

Analogies I use are related to other sensorial experiences. Perusing food magazines or blogs is really different than the physical sensation of encountering food. Sure, smell and taste provide additional sensorial information but even proximity to an actual material thing is way different than its image. Perhaps a better analogy would be the slipperiness of polyester materials vs. cotton, linen, silk, or wool. The duration, the depth, it's not the same.

Which is not to say that photographic prints are always better than digital images, but it is to recognize that there has been a huge change in the way we digest and produce images, the cycle of influence, absorption, regurgitation, and engagement happening with a rapacity that can lead to indigestion. What was it Spiderman said? With great power comes great responsibility? Or, Eleanor Roosevelt, "with freedom comes responsibility." Digital would seem to proffer both, yet it seems only to have deflected much of its potential to further capitalism's frenzy. Solace is in those places where its ability to disseminate images widely and with fury have given rise to actual freedoms and responsibilities. It's no panacea, just another tool that gets used as it gets used.