THE SOURCE OF APPROPRIATION:

SHERRIE LEVINE'S *AFTER WALKER EVANS* SUITE

by

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Sherrie Levine: An Introduction

Sherrie Levine's *After Walker Evans* suite from 1981, consisting of twenty-two photographs, marks a point of maturity in her career. Born in Hazelton, Pennsylvania in 1947, she received her B.F.A. in 1969, and M.F.A. in 1973 from the University of Wisconsin. The year following her graduation she had her first solo show at the De Saisset Art Museum in Santa Clara, California. Three years later, in 1977 she had a show at 3 Mercer Street, where she placed, on sale, seventy-five pairs of shoes styled for a man, but sized for a child (Plate 1); and, importantly, was included in the exhibition *Pictures*, curated by Douglas Crimp at Artists Space in New York. The work in the *Pictures* exhibition led to Levine's interest in appropriating images, which is the defining characteristic of her work. In 1980 she exhibited reproductions of Andreas Feininger's collages, as well as her rephotographs titled *After Edward Weston* (Plate 2).[1] In 1981 Levine created what is still her most recognized series, the *After Walker Evans* suite (Appendix). The twenty-two photographs in this suite are rephotographed from *Walker Evans: First and Last*, a book published by Walker Evans's Estate in 1978, which includes images shot during his time working for the Farm Security Administration, 1935-1938.[2] Although most critics assumed that the source of the *After Walker Evans* suite was *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, a novel by James Agee with photographs by Evans, this paper demonstrates that that is not the case.

[1] Molly Nesbit, "Without Walls," in *The Last Picture Show: Artists Using Photography 1960 - 1982*, ed. Douglas Fogle (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2003), 254.

[2] Evans's photographs were printed, in *First and Last*, in 300-line screen duotone by Thomas Todd Company, Boston, Massachusetts, on Warren's 80# Lustro Offset Enamel Dull supplied by the Lindenmeyr Paper Corporation.

The photographs included in Levine's *After Walker Evans* suite function as a significant artistic moment in the twentieth-century. Their critique of important artistic qualities such as originality, authenticity, authorial ownership, and representation contributed to the break with modernism and rise of postmodernism in the late seventies. Resulting from their critique, Levine's appropriations sparked discussions among historians and critics on the subject of these issues. However, little attention has been given to the source of her appropriation and its significance pertaining to her *After Walker Evans* photographs.

Following the completion of the *After Walker Evans* suite, Levine began photographing reproductions of paintings in books by artists such as Egon Schiele, Claude Monet, and Franz Marc (Plate 3). In 1984 she painted reproductions of works by Henri Matisse, Piet Mondrian, and Kasimir Malevich, meticulously copying them from color plates in art books. She also made her own paintings in the mid-eighties that were executed in a minimalistic style. The paintings consist of stripes, checkerboards, and "gold knots" —plywood left unpainted except for the knot plugs, which she painted in a metallic gold (Plates 4, 5). While more recently moving away from using photography, Levine has not veered far from her initial investigations of appropriation and ownership. In 1991, for example, she cast three highly polished bronze urinals, appropriately titled, *After Marcel Duchamp* (Plate 6). The same year she also had six pool tables manufactured for an installation based on Man Ray's painting *La Fortune* from 1938 (Plate 7).

In 2003, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis organized an important survey of conceptual and postconceptual works, *The Last Picture Show: Artists Using Photography*

1960-1982. My interest in Levine's *After Walker Evans* photographs stems, in part, from this exhibition, where the entire suite of twenty-two photographs was shown (Appendix, Plate 8). However, this was not the only time these photographs have been exhibited in their entirety (the photographs were first exhibited at the Metro Pictures gallery in New York in 1981). Their inclusion in this survey signals the work's impact on postmodern artistic practice and theory. This thesis aims to demonstrate the significance of the source Levine used in rephotographing Evans's images, to consider the important distinction between readymades and appropriation, and, finally, to discuss issues of ownership and representation as they apply to Levine's *After Walker Evans* photographs.

The Last Picture Show: Artists Using Photography

The Last Picture Show: Artists Using Photography 1960-1982, curated by Douglas Fogle, involved the work of fifty-seven artists, including Vito Acconci, Hans Haacke, Barbara Kruger, Louise Lawler, Richard Prince, Cindy Sherman, and Sherrie Levine. The exhibition examined how the medium and history of photography radically changed in the latter half of the twentieth century. It was one of the most important, large-scale investigations into the complex relationship between photography and contemporary art, and focused on the two generations of conceptual artists, generally grouped by decades: the sixties and eighties, overlapping in the seventies.

Initiated by the conceptual movement of the sixties, conceptual and postconceptual photography increasingly placed significance on the "world of ideas" and strove to "advance the chimerical qualities of the medium rather than its alleged capacity to capture objective truth."[3] *The Last Picture Show* presented a visual survey of the use of photography in conceptual and postconceptual work. Fogle's focus in curating the

[3] Kathy Halbreich, "Foreword," in *The Last Picture Show,*6.

exhibition was directed at the neglected half of the two divergent approaches photography has taken in its history as a medium: the documentation of a concept or "idea" by photography, as opposed to the traditional approach to picture-making, such as Henri Cartier-Bresson's "decisive moment."[4] "The artists represented in the exhibition looked at photography instrumentally, as a means to an end," Fogle explains, "taking up the camera as a tool."[5] In other words, these artists used the camera to articulate their ideas, rather than as a means of expression as exemplified in the photographs of Alfred Stieglitz and Edward Weston.

The title of Fogle's exhibition was taken from Larry McMurtry's 1966 novel of the same title and the subsequent 1971 film by Peter Bogdanovich.[6] Telling the tale of a group of young adolescents in a dying Texas town, the book and film convey a loss of innocence symbolized by the closing of the town's last movie theatre.[7] Fogle presents *The Last Picture Show* as analogous to McMurtry's fictional tale, by stating that "historically, we too might be seen as having suffered our own loss of innocence."[8] Fogle suggests that the development of postmodernism brought about a loss of innocence, after which art will never be the same. In particular, the work of the two generations of conceptual artists challenged the inclusion of photography in the "context of the autonomous aesthetic object."[9] Their exposure of photography as a tool served to dismantle the advantageous notions of art-photography, signifying a loss of innocence.

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[4] Douglas Fogle, "The Last Picture Show," in *The Last Picture Show,* 10.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.

The photographic work of conceptual artists in the sixties, seventies, and eighties prioritized photography's fundamental characteristic—the ability to document. Unlike painting, and even sculpture, photography cannot escape representation. Even art-photographs represent something—a human torso, shadows cast on a concrete ground, a wilting pepper. Art-photographs, such as those by Cartier-Bresson, Stieglitz, and Weston, and the photographs in *The Last Picture Show* are significantly different. Unlike the photographs included in the *Last Picture Show*, an art-photograph seeks to maintain an aesthetic presence akin to that of a painting or sculpture. In "Anti-Photographers," critic Nancy Foote observes that "conceptual art's Duchampian underpinnings strip the photograph of its artistic pretensions, changing it from a mirror into a window. What it reveals becomes important, not what it is."[10] The artists in *The Last Picture Show*, as Foote's essay suggests, concerned themselves not with creating photographs meant to be considered art objects, but who, in their artistic practice, use photography, but are not strictly photographers.

The artists in *The Last Picture Show* use photography to document, record, or illustrate an "idea." Reacting to Greenbergian notions of formalism, the two generations of conceptual artists, share an interest in how knowledge is acquired and disseminated. In contrast, formalism is concerned with the notion that everything essential to a work of art is contained within it. Greenbergian formalism advocated the essential qualities of a work's medium as its primary content. In painting, then, the artist's concern should be on the flatness of the canvas, and the application of paint should enhance that flatness. Conceptual art, on the other hand, reaffirms the "centrality of knowledge" mediated

[10] Nancy Foote, "The Anti-Photographers," in *The Last Picture Show,* 24.

through representation and the primacy of the "idea" through an increased disinterest in the aesthetic object.[11]

The first generation of conceptual artists, including Joseph Kosuth and Vito Acconci, emphasized the extent to which society's understanding of the world is based on empirical knowledge. In "'Marks of Indifference:' Aspects of Photography in, or as, Conceptual Art," artist and writer Jeff Wall states that conceptual photography "posits its escape from the criteria of art-photography through the artist's performance as a non-artist [photographer] who, despite being a non-artist, is nevertheless compelled to make photographs. These photographs lose their status as representations before the eyes of their audience: they are 'dull,' 'boring,' and 'insignificant.' Only by being so could they accomplish the intellectual mandate of reductivisim at the heart . . . of Conceptual art."[12] The reductivism Wall refers to is the facet of conceptual art that, ironically and in a Greenbergian manner, reduces photography to its essential function—that of documentation.

For instance, Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* from 1965, reveals how one recognizes and empirically knows what constitutes a chair (Plate 9). In *One and Three Chairs* the variations of what defines a chair are presented: a photograph of a chair, an actual chair, and the typed definition of a chair. Based on the same practice of documenting an idea, but aimed at recording an act in addition to the idea, Acconci's *Step Piece* from 1970, records an act carried out by the artist (Plate 10). On a daily basis, Acconci would step up and down on a stool at the rate of thirty steps per minute for as

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[11] Frances Colpitt, "Past and Present Moments of Conceptual Art: The Breadth of Knowledge," in *Knowledge: Aspects of Conceptual Art* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), 24.

[12] Jeff Wall, "'Marks of Indifference:' Aspects of Photography in, or as, Conceptual Art," in *The Last Picture Show*, 44.

long as he could, until too tired to continue. The photographs, then, serve simply to document the physical act completed by the artist. The second generation of conceptualists, or post-conceptualists, on the other hand, were "motivated by postmodern critiques of representation as a construction of knowledge and the institutional nature of art."[13] While conceptual artists from the sixties strove to dematerialize the art object, emphasizing meaning over formal issues of appearance, post-conceptualists, such as Levine, Prince, and Sherman, embraced a less strict mode of anti-formalism by making visually attractive objects while at the same time emphasizing their ideas.

The photograph as aesthetic object, rather than conceptual document, participates in the culture of the spectacle. That is, it is a persuasive commodity operating under the pretense of objectivity and neutrality. In "Photography at the Dock," critic Abigail Solomon-Godeau points out that a difference exists between "artists whose work addresses photography . . . and those artists for whom photography remains obdurately complicit in the operations of the spectacle."[14] For instance, Evans's photograph of Allie Mae Burroughs, in which he presents her as a hardened, frail, economically disadvantaged woman in order to bring a sense of awareness to poverty, operates within the realm of the spectacle (Plate 11). Levine's photographs, on the other hand, exist within the context of addressing photography; her work is not about the photograph, rather it is about the idea—the act of appropriation—documented by the photograph.

The "idea" refers to Kosuth's conceptual work revealing the various ways one knows a chair. On the other hand, Acconci's *Step Piece*, while still containing an idea, documents his act of stepping up and down on a stool. The distinction between artists

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[13] Colpitt, "Breadth of Knowledge,"11.

[14] Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Photography at the Dock," in *The Art of Memory/The Loss of History*, ed. William Olander, (New York: New Museum, 1985), 51.

whose use photography, such as Levine, and art photographers, such as Stieglitz and Weston, is based on the "assumption that a critical practice concerned with still photography must first of all dismantle all notions of photographic transparency, neutrality, or truth" that so often characterizes aesthetic photography of the nineteenth to early twentieth-centuries.[15] Part of Levine's critique rests in her scrutinizing the creation of the spectacle Godeau describes. She is critiquing Evans's spectacularization of the Burroughs family, that is, his representation of these individuals, in their misfortune, and the resulting feelings of pity invoked in the viewer.

The postconceptual artists in *The Last Picture Show*, and more specifically for the purposes of this paper, Levine, utilize photography to critique issues of representation, ownership, and authority of the artist. They particularly focused on the propagandistic infiltrations of photographic imagery into American popular culture. In contrast to their conceptual predecessors, more interested in examining aspects of empirical knowledge, postconceptualists consider how knowledge is distributed through media and photographic imagery. Richard Prince's *Untitled (cowboy)* from 1990 reveals how, through subtle propaganda, Marlboro seduces its patrons with imagery of the rugged cowboy out in the open range in order to sell their product (Plate 12). Their cigarettes are equated with the romanticized image and idea of the American West and glorified cowboy. *The Last Picture Show* surveys the beginnings of this investigation, of how knowledge and ideas are processed, and the continuation of that study by the second generation of conceptual artists, who more narrowly focused their attention on propagandistic imagery dispersed through media, film, and advertisements.

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[15] Solomon-Godeau, "Photography at the Dock," 51.

Through their use of photography, the artists in *The Last Picture Show* challenged the ideological construct of what constitutes a picture. By appropriating images from popular culture and re-presenting them as "unique" objects these artists question the claims to originality that photography advocates. As a result, they essentially changed our perception of the history of art and the "picture." In Fogle's words, these artists are the "ultimate purveyors of the last picture, as they offer us the photographic spoils of a world saturated with images."[16] Levine's photographs of Walker Evans's black and white Depression era documents fit within the category of "photographic spoils." By photographing images of some of Evans' most celebrated pictures, those for the Farm Security Administration, from a book, Levine literally re-presents photographs the world has already seen. She reduces photography to its most essential trait by documenting documentary photographic images. In doing so, she comments on scholar Susan Sontag's claim that "to photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed," from her widely read book *On Photography*.[17]

The difference between the "photograph" (the aesthetic object advocated by Stieglitz and Weston) and the "photographed" (evidenced by artists in *The Last Picture Show*), is explained by art historian and critic, Frances Colpitt, in her essay "The Photograph and the Photographed." The "photograph" is understood as an art object, something to be looked at much like a painting or sculpture.[18] The "photographed,"

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[16] Fogle, "The Last Picture Show," 18.
[17] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 4.
[18] Colpitt, "The Photograph and the Photographed," *Journal: A Contemporary Art Magazine* (October/November, 1979): 46.

however, is the thing represented in the work; the documentation of idea, for example.[19] Levine synthesizes both of these approaches by photographing the photograph.

Initially, Levine photographed images by Edward Weston of his son Neil from a poster designed by George Tice and published by the Witkin Gallery. She subsequently rephotographed images by Walker Evans, Eliot Porter, and Alexandr Rodchenko (Plate 13). The *After Walker Evans* photographs from 1981 are compositionally comparable to Evans's images (Appendix). They are of sharecroppers, Allie Mae and Lloyd Burroughs, the Burroughs family, a landlord, small southern churches, other buildings, and rural scenes from the American South (Plates 14, 15, 16, 17). There are pictures of billboards, landscapes, and children's graves. Her photographs, like Evans's, are black and white. The sizes of the individual prints in the suite owned by the Metropolitan Museum in New York are quite small—all measuring approximately four by five inches.[20] They are very grainy, a result of their reproduction from a book plate, and the black and whites are heavily contrasted, unlike Evans's images which are perfectly exposed. [21]

Levine in New York: Setting the Stage

Levine's entry into the New York art scene is contextually important for situating the creation of the *After Walker Evans* photographs, and is also central to understanding the art world of the late seventies and early eighties, and the fruition of postmodernism in the fine arts. Despite Levine's inclusion in several shows in the mid-seventies, critic Molly Nesbit suggests that few New York galleries were recruiting artists during the time

[19] Colpitt, "The Photograph and the Photographed," 46.
[20] There are reportedly two other editions, with prints the size of 8x10 inches and 11 x 14 inches.
[21] This description is based solely on the suite owned by the Metropolitan Museum of New York. The author has not viewed the subsequently editions.

Levine first arrived in the city.[22] The result of decreased gallery recruitment led a group of young artists to work and show collectively and to even invent exhibition spaces to show their work.[23] This group included Louise Lawler, Cindy Sherman, David Salle, and Sherrie Levine. After finishing art school in Buffalo, New York in 1977, Sherman and her boyfriend, artist Robert Longo, moved to New York City. Salle arrived in New York in 1975, and two years later invited Levine to teach with him at the Hartford School of Arts in Hartford, Connecticut, where they likely commuted from New York.[24]

Uninterested in what galleries or institutions would think of their work, Levine, Lawler, Sherman, and Salle considered possibilities outside of institutionalized social constructs and began critiquing issues of the male gaze, representations of women, issues of the self, identity, the status of the individual, and of the Other.[25] Their collaborative projects also served to reject the myth of the individual artist and creative genius, an important critique in Levine's *After Walker Evans* suite.[26] This group's collaborative efforts shaped a significant direction in the New York art scene and provided the context for Levine's *After Walker Evans* photographs.

Douglas Crimp's 1977 *Pictures* show introduced the work of these artists to a broader public. The artists included in the exhibition, and those mentioned in Crimp's subsequent essay "Pictures" in 1979, formed a group that would later be referred to as the "Pictures Generation." Other artists in the *Pictures* exhibition were Troy Brauntuch, Jack Goldstein, Robert Longo, and Philip Smith. Two important artists part of the "Pictures

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[22] Nesbit, "Without Walls," 249.

[23] Ibid. In addition to these artists creating spaces to exhibit their work, numerous alternative spaces for showing art arose from federal art grants.

[24] Ibid.

[25] The "Other" refers to those people who do not fall in the category of the upper-class, American male, and is best discussed by Edward Said in *Orientalism*, first published in 1978 by Routledge and Kegan Paul, and reprinted by Penguin Books in 1991.

[26] Colpitt, "The Breadth of Knowledge," 19.

Generation" but not in the exhibition were Cindy Sherman and Richard Prince. Included in the *Pictures* exhibition was a series of paintings by Levine titled *Sons and Lovers* from 1977, which were based on presidential profiles found on the penny, quarter, and the half-dollar. The following year, and into 1979, these painted silhouettes led to an *Untitled* series of collages. *Untitled (President: 2)* from 1979, for example, consists a cut-out image of a fashion model, from a magazine, in the silhouetted shape of George Washington (Plate 18).

In addition to bringing together an important group of young artists, Crimp's exhibition established two things: the plurality of the term "picture," and the then-current break with modernism, which he termed postmodernism. The noun "picture," as he asserts, can be used descriptively, often non-specifically and colloquially. Or, it can be used as a verb, referring to a "mental process as well as the production of an aesthetic object."[27] This latter, broader definition of the term "picture" allows it to take on the designation of an act. To "picture" is to make use of photography other than for its aesthetic potential, and to exploit the medium as a means to communicate an "idea."

Levine's rephotographing of a photographic image is one way artists were making use of photography, creating the "photographed." The "process" of rephotography, emerging the same year *Pictures* debuted, is credited to Richard Prince. He began taking photographs of photographic images from pop culture, claiming authorship of the imagery.[28] In *Untitled (living rooms)* from 1977, his first rephotographs, Prince took photographs of various illustrations of living rooms (Plate 19).

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[27] Douglas Crimp, "Pictures" *October,* no. 8 (Spring, 1979): 75.

[28] In an interview with Paul Taylor, "Americana: an Interview with Richard Prince," *Flash Art* (May/June, 2005): 123, Prince recalled that Levine called him to ask permission to "do what he was doing (rephotograph)."

The technique of rephotography would soon be subsumed under the broader category of appropriation, which included Sherman's recreation of female stereotypes and Salle's paintings. Appropriation, a term first used in 1980 in relation to Levine, Longo, Prince, and Sherman by Crimp in the essay, "The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism," is the use of an existing image, form, or object and the remaking of it into another autonomous object. Terminology such as steal, confiscate, purloin, seize, take possession of, and to claim as one's own, have all been used to refer to the act of appropriation.[29]

A distinction needs to be made, however, between the image within the photograph and the physical photographic print. Levine and Prince claimed authorship of the imagery within the photograph, not the photographs themselves. Like other "Pictures" artists, Prince also dealt with issues of identity, authority, and originality. The topic of appropriation would expand in the art world, becoming increasingly popular with these young artists working with and around Levine in New York.

Distinguishing Between the Readymade and Appropriation

Appropriation, while distinct from the readymade, can be traced back to the tradition of taking objects out of everyday life and placing them in the context of art, as established by Dadaist, Marcel Duchamp. One of the most influential contributions of the Dadaists is the prolific use of existing objects and artifacts, often in the form of collage. Not to be confused with artists using appropriation, artists associated with this movement literally and physically incorporated objects from everyday life into their works. The Dada movement, which began roughly in 1916, emerged out of the

[29] Crimp, "Photographic Activity of Postmodernism," in *October*, no. 15 (Winter, 1980): 98. Crimp states "Their images are purloined, confiscated, appropriated, stolen."

catastrophic events of World War I. Producing works that were frequently illogical, irrational, and even anarchical, artists such as Hannah Höch, for example, used collage, to create disparate couplings and incongruous imagery in her work. While collage, based on the juxtaposition of pre-existing materials to create a composition, was first introduced into "high" art by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in the midst of the cubist movement in 1912, the Dadaists are credited with championing the idiom.

An important part of collage is the use of existing materials, such as sheets of music, newspaper, or magazine clippings. This use of non-traditional materials led to a radical moment in the history of art: Duchamp's "invention" of the readymade. The best known of Duchamp's readymades is *Fountain*, a mass-produced urinal purchased by the artist, placed on a pedestal, signed, and submitted to the first exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists in New York in 1917 (Plate 20). *Fountain*, however, was not included in the exhibition, rejected on the premise that it was vulgar and unoriginal, though technically dismissed for an incorrect submission form. *Fountain* was soon lost and is documented in the form of a photograph, taken by Alfred Stieglitz, and in existing fabrications.

A statement defending Duchamp's *Fountain* was published in the second issue of *The Blind Man* in 1917. In its defense, likely written by Duchamp himself along with Beatrice Wood, the statement asserts "Whether Mr. Mutt [an alias of Duchamp's] with his own hands made the fountain or not has no importance. He CHOSE it. He took an ordinary article of life, placed it so that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view—created a new thought for that object."[30] Although controversial at the time of its inception, Duchamp's "creation" of the readymade is an important

[30] *Blindman* No. 2 (New York, May 1917): 5.

artistic moment in the early twentieth century, one which significantly influenced artists in the second half of the century. Levine, in her choice to photograph a photographic image, is also creating a "new thought" for that photograph. The Duchampian nature of her work, in its insistence on choice over artistic creation and the importance of the "idea," is significant and no more obviously exemplified than in her 1991 manufactured, and homage-like, bronze sculptures, *After Duchamp*.

While the act of appropriation and the readymade are fundamentally different, they do share an emphasis on artistic choice. Appropriation, in contrast to the readymade, is the utilization of a preexisting image and the remaking of it into a unique object. Levine's photographs are appropriations; they take possession of pre-existing photographs. She utilizes Evans's images in order to create her own, separate photographs. While she uses Evans's photographs in a readymade fashion, she is not physically taking his photographs, placing them in a frame, and claiming ownership over them. Rather, she takes Evans's imagery, makes a photograph, and claims ownership of his images. She makes use of Evans's images in her own photographic prints, and as a result of the rephotographic process, recontextualizes the imagery of his photographs. It is in this context that her works are appropriations, and not readymades.

Like the difference between the readymade and appropriation, distinctions exists between appropriation and copying, paying homage, and forgery. Levine's act of appropriation, more specifically rephotography, should not be confused with copying or forgery. To copy something is to imitate, to reproduce in the manner of another, to replicate. Levine is not imitating Evans, but is acknowledging his role in her appropriation. Her photographs of photographic images and appropriation in general, are

probably most often confused with forgery. The key distinction, however, is that Levine is not claiming that the images she appropriates are the work of someone else, their "rightful" author. If Levine were a forger she would take a photograph in the manner of Walker Evans and claim that it was Evans's photograph. In contrast, she is claiming Evans's images as her own.

To produce a work in acknowledgement of the significance or importance of another artist is generally characterized as paying homage. This aspect of Levine's appropriation is unclear in her photographs. Her work critiques issues of ownership and representation, while at the same time appearing homage-like. In fact, Levine's tradition of working "after" another artist seems a continuous act of paying homage to artists she admires. In addition to Evans and Duchamp, she has created works after Stuart Davis, Walissy Kandinsky, Fernand Leger, Franz Marc, Henri Matisse, Piet Mondrian, Claude Monet, Man Ray, Eliot Porter, Alexandr Rodchenko, Egon Schiele, and Edward Weston.

Other artists using appropriation in their work around the same time as Levine include artists John Baldessari and David Salle. Baldessari utilizes media from advertising agencies, film, and popular culture to create photo-collages, and could arguably be the first to utilize rephotography. In *A Movie: Directional Piece Where People are Looking* (1972-1973) Baldessari made still photographs of images on his television and arranged them on a wall (Plate 21). More closely related to Levine's appropriation, and rephotography in general, Baldessari took a photograph of a reproduction of one of Frank Stella's paintings, *Takt-l-Sulyaman* from 1967, to create *A 1968 painting*. In *Blasted Allegories* from 1978, he randomly took photographs of a television screen by placing a camera on a timer. The resulting work is a menagerie of

images appropriated from television, arranged in a random sequence, and organized according to color and text (Plate 22).

Salle, a student of Baldessari's and friend of Levine's, also incorporates imagery from popular culture in his paintings, creating something akin to a painted collage. Salle overlays images constructing layered, complex paintings. In a statement reflecting issues in his own work, Salle wrote "the pictures present an improvised view of life as normal. Life is shown as we think we see it but in fact never do. The pictures imitate life to find a way out."[31] Expanding on the Duchampian readymade, Baldessari and Salle use discarded, everyday, mundane objects and imagery to create a separate and autonomous works. Levine's close affiliation with Salle provides little doubt she was aware the work he was doing, and likely even influenced by it.

The Implications of Appropriation in Artistic Practice and Theory

While many of the artists associated with the postconceptual movement utilize appropriation in their work, there are earlier examples of artists using appropriation. Jasper John's *White Flag* from 1955, for instance, appropriates the image of the American Flag, while creating an altogether distinct and separate object (Plate 23). Using a monochromatic palette and encaustic, Johns painted an image of the American flag. In *Skyway* from 1964, Robert Rauschenberg appropriates images of John F. Kennedy and Rubens's Venus from *Venus at her Toilet*, into his oil and silkscreen painting (Plate 24). Salle, who is closely tied with the postconceptual movement, once

[31] Nesbit, "Without Walls," 249, n. 9: from the first version of a statement in typescript dated 1977-1978 in Salle's archives. It would be published, revised and dated 1979, in *Cover* (Winter 1980-1981): 52-53. Salle's remark about the "imitation of life" refers to Douglas Sirk's 1959 film *Imitation of Life*.

stated "Everything in this world is simultaneously itself and a representation of itself," uses pornographic imagery in *His Brain* from 1984 (Plate 25).[32]

The topic of appropriation generated Levine and Louise Lawler's collaboration in 1981 to 1982, known as "A Picture is No Substitute for Anything." In response to a statement made by critic Hollis Frampton that "a photograph is no substitute for anything," Levine and Lawler set up a series of temporary exhibits titled after Frampton's claim.[33] In one of these temporary collaborations Levine exhibited her *After Eliot Porter* suite, implying a picture can be a substitute for nearly anything, including another picture (Plate 26). Levine and Lawler's reasoning can be broadened to include art historians, who often use pictures to stand in for the art objects discussed in classes or publications. For individuals, pictures often serve as reminders of relatives and friends. Levine illustrates in her photographs of photographic images that indeed a picture can be a substitute for another picture.

In 1982, artist Barbara Kruger commented on the increased popularity of appropriation among young artists, stating, "their production . . . frequently consists of an appropriation or 'taking' of a picture . . . suggesting a consideration of a work's 'original' use and exchange values. The implicit critique within the work might easily be subsumed by the power granted its 'original.'"[34] The critique of the "original" work of art has become a popular topic in postmodern discourse and is best articulated in the writings of critic Rosalind Krauss.

The break with Greenbergian modernism that coincides with the beginnings of postmodernism, for Krauss and a number of other scholars and critics, resulted in the

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[32] Peter Schjeldahl, "An Interview with David Salle," in *Salle* (New York: Vintage, 1987), 48.
[33] Nesbit, "Without Walls," 255.
[34] Barbara Kruger, "'Taking' Pictures," *Screen* 23 (July-August, 1982): 90.

founding of *October* in 1976. A journal dedicated to art theory and criticism, *October* welcomed debates surrounding issues of quality, originality, authenticity, and transcendence.[35] *October*'s contributors have included Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, Douglas Crimp, Craig Owens, and Howard Singerman, all of whom who have written about Levine's work. Heavily influenced by the writings of Walter Benjamin and Roland Barthes, these writers aimed to reveal and critique the fictions of representation that are often accepted without question, including "ideological assumptions about family, society, nation, race, gender, law, culture, and religion."[36] Contributors to *October* were fervently supportive of Levine's work and played an important role in legitimizing her early on in her career. Singerman has commented that "one could imagine the photographs [*After Walker Evans*] as though they were written for *October*, particularly as it [the journal] worked at the intersection of art criticism and a new art-historical practice in the early 1980s."[37]

Victor Burgin, an English artist and writer, claimed that Levine was made the "exemplary postmodern-authorial-deconstructive artist" by the critics and writers of *October*.[38] The journal and its contributors eagerly advocated the significance of her work. The majority of critical essays focusing on her work are, not surprisingly, published in *October*. Outside of this context, a relatively small number of essays and articles are dedicated entirely to Levine. Yet, most of the literature dealing with her work, including those by Crimp, Krauss, and Buchloh, lumps her in with the group of

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[35] Irving Sandler, *Art of the Postmodern Era: From the Late 1960s to the Early 1990s* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), 335-337. *October* was founded by Rosalind Krauss, Annette Michelson and Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe.

[36] Ibid., 340.

[37] Howard Singerman, "Sherrie Levine's Art History," *October,* no. 101 (June, 2002): 10.

[38] Sandler, *Postmodern Era*, 356.

artists also using photography at the time, such as Sherman, Prince, and Kruger, devoting relatively little dedicated attention to her work. Critics focused on the issues of originality, authenticity, and representation as exemplified by the works of this group of artists as a whole, rather than individually.

Krauss's influential 1981 essay "The Originality of the Avant-Garde: A Postmodern Repetition" clearly outlines her postmodern critique of originality. In discussing posthumous casts of an unfinished sculpture, *The Gates of Hell*, by Auguste Rodin, Krauss argues that the existing editions are merely a multiple of copies.[39] By focusing on the problematic issue of originality with casts made after an artist's death, Krauss asserts that Rodin's sculptures are copies of an original that does not exist. In her deconstruction of the work of Rodin and other male artists who have been deemed geniuses by the art historical canon in their claims to originality, Krauss reveals what she calls the "cult of originality" on which the modernist avant-garde is based.[40] Her argument is based on Marxist philosopher and literary critic Walter Benjamin's "cult of authenticity," outlined in his 1936 "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," later translated into English in the late sixties. According to Benjamin, the cult of authenticity is an elitist circle to which unique, aesthetic objects belong.

Krauss contends that the mythic notion of originality is itself based on repetition; providing as an example the multitude of paintings that begin with the grid. It is inconceivable that anyone could, or would, lay claim to have invented the grid, just as it is unthinkable that anyone would claim to own the image within a photograph, painting,

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[39] Rosalind Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde: A Postmodernist Repetition," *October,* no. 18 (Autumn 1981): 48.

[40] Ibid., 53.

or other representational object.[41] In her critique of originality, she looks to Levine's photographs after Weston and Porter, arguing that the "original" photographs by Weston and Porter (and by implication Evans) are themselves, in fact, copies. Using Barthes to support her argument, Krauss proclaims that Levine is not initiating the act of copying. Rather, the male modernist "geniuses" she appropriates are recording an object, image, or moment in time, through photography. Linking Levine to the realist movement of the late nineteenth century, Krauss quotes Barthes: "realism consists not in copying the real but in copying a [depicted] copy. Through secondary mimesis [realism] copies what is already a copy."[42] Krauss's discussion of Levine's rephotographs recognized the importance of the artist's work and her critique of originality.

The History of Evans's FSA Images and *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*

Evans's images appropriated by Levine all derive from his participation in the United States government's documentation of the effects of the Great Depression. Evans was a photographer for the Resettlement Administration (RA), a government agency designed to aid poor farmers, established in 1935. Photographers hired by the RA were assigned the task of documenting the suffering of American citizens in order to enact social reform aimed at alleviating poverty. After receiving considerable criticism from Congress, the RA was incorporated into a new organization in 1937, the Farm Security Administration (FSA).[43] While the subjects of Evans's Alabama sharecroppers from 1936, thirteen of which Levine appropriated, were not initially part of the FSA project, most of them eventually became part of the archive now housed by the Library of Congress, and, importantly, part of the public domain. The FSA granted Evans leave

[41] Krauss, "Originality of the Avant-Garde," 53-54.
[42] Ibid., 64.
[43] www.memory.loc.gov, visited 02/10/2007.

from his duties as a governmental photographer in order to collaborate with writer James Agee on a project for *Fortune* magazine, under the government's provision that the negatives from his time in Hale County, Alabama, would be given to the FSA. Frustratingly for Roy Stryker, Chief of the Historical Section in the FSA, Evans did not always hand over all his negatives from the government project, as his contract specified he should. His refusal to provide Stryker with all the negatives is an intriguing aspect of Evans's employment by the government, one which would later have implications for Levine's *After Walker Evans* photographs.

The *Fortune* project, dedicated to investigating the rural American South, was to be an article on a sharecropper's family and a study of farm economics in the South.[44] As part of the assignment Agee and Evans lived with a family of sharecroppers for several weeks, documenting and photographing their lives. Prior to this assignment, *Fortune* had already published three issues reporting on the life and circumstances of average middle-aged men and their families in America. This series of articles covering the lives of Americans around the country included reports on a man in Detroit who worked in an automotive assembly line, an unemployed construction worker from Pennsylvania, and a man who lived in New York and worked as a supervisor for a well-established telephone company.[45]

The three sharecropper families documented by Agee and Evans—the Burroughs, the Fields, and the Tengles—were actually all related and constituted a small, extended familial community. Lloyd Burroughs's wife, Allie Mae, was Bud Fields's daughter, and

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[44] Jeff Rosenheim, "'The Cruel Radiance of What Is:' Walker Evans and the South," in *Walker Evans* New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), 310.

[45] B. W. Brannan, "Walker Evans: Two Albums in the Library of Congress," *History of Photography* 19 (Spring, 1995): 60.

Fields's wife was Frank Tengle's half-sister.[46] *Fortune*'s decision not to publish the article was disappointing to both Agee and Evans. The magazine ultimately rejected the project, in part, due to the publication's return to a "centrist, pro-business position" coinciding with the return of its original owner, Henry Luce.[47] When *Fortune* decided not to print the project, Evans worked with Stryker to distribute the photographs as a cohesive group. Keeping the photographs together as a body of work meant to be read in a film-like manner was important to Evans.[48] In fact he approached Stryker about returning to Hale County to make a film of the family of sharecroppers.

However, when the book and film attempts fell through, Agee and Evans decided to publish the project independently in the form of a novel. Eventually Agee's text and Evans's accompanying photographs would be published in 1941 as the book, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. While the 1941 edition was not widely popular and sold a limited number copies, the second edition, published in 1960 with twice the number of photographs as the first—sixty-two—is considered a classic.[49] In the text of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, Agee refers to the men and their families by pseudonyms: Burroughs is replaced with Grudger, Fields with Woods, and Tengle with Ricketts. Evidently, Agee thought he was protecting their identities.

The majority of photographs taken for Agee's and Evans's book later became part of the FSA archives in the Library of Congress, even those not printed in the book. The number of photographs included in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* was relatively small,

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[46] Brannan, "Walker Evans: Two Albums," 61.

[47] Rosenheim, "'The Cruel Radiance of What Is:' Walker Evans and the South," 95.

[48] Conversation with Jessica May, Assistant Curator of Photographs, Amon Carter Museum, February 23, 2007.

[49] Diana Emery Hulick, "Walker Evans and Folk Art," *History of Photography,* 17 (Summer 1993): 140. Also reported in *Walker Evans: Lyric Documentary* (London: Steidl Publishers 2006).

and it is unclear how many negatives make up the entirety of the Hale County project, as not all of them wound up in the government's hands. For example, Evans's photograph of the Burroughs family from 1936, which Levine appropriated, is not in the Library of Congress' archives (Plate 27).

The Library of Congress's catalog of Evans's photographs published in 1973 brings attention to Evans's negatives place in the public domain, as is evidenced by the accompanying ordering system. Each photograph in the catalog is assigned a LC (Library of Congress) negative number. Since the negatives belong to the government, and are subsequently in the public domain, anyone can purchase one of Evans's photographs from this project.

The Photographs: Levine's *After Walker Evans* Suite

Levine's *After Walker Evans* photographs were made from a simple process referred to as an internegative. In this technique, a photograph is taken of another photograph, or photographic image, either from a print or a plate in a book. The resulting negative can then be used to create another photographic print. The ensuing image is typically less intensely toned; not an exact copy, but as Molly Nesbit refers to it in "Without Walls," a "shift."[50] Levine's photographs, taken from plates in a book, are two or three times removed from Evans's "originals." The plates themselves have, therefore, lost some of the rich tonality of Evans's "original" prints, as well as the crisp clarity of his images. Levine's prints, however, emphasize the fact that they were taken from a book by heavily contrasting the blacks and whites, which accentuate their distance from the original, rendering them as very poorly printed photographs.

[50] Nesbit, "Without Walls," 254.

The term "After," used in the photographs's title, is an important aspect in describing these images. "After" temporally situates Levine's work subsequent to Evans's photographs; they are literally separated by forty-five years. It also implies a following behind, even an interest in following Evans as a prominent figure in the history of art and photography. Furthermore, "after" can suggest a reaction to, or doing something in consequence of something else, even the imitation of another, or the paying of homage. Regarding her work, Levine has stated,

> Instead of taking photographs of trees or nudes, I take photographs of photographs. I choose pictures that manifest the desire that nature and culture provide us with a sense of order and meaning. I appropriate these images to express my own simultaneous longing for the passion of engagement and the sublimity of aloofness. I hope that in my photographs of photographs an uneasy peace will be made between my attraction to the ideals these pictures exemplify and my desire to have no ideals or fetters whatsoever. It is my aspiration that my photographs, which contain their own contradiction, would represent the best of both worlds.[51]

The source of Levine's appropriation has widely been assumed to be the second edition of Agee and Evans's legendary book *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. However, close comparison of the images in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* to Levine's suite indicates that this is cannot be the source, because not all of the images she appropriated are included in this book. Rather she took the photographs of Evans's photographic

[51] Benjamin Buchloh, "Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art" *Artforum* 21 (September 1982): 52-53.

mages from a book published by his Estate in 1978, *Walker Evans: First and Last*.[52] All twenty-two images Levine appropriated are in this catalog. The plates are large, suggesting that Levine would have no problem taking legible photographs of them. Idiosyncrasies and other slight imperfections in the plates are also legible in Levine's photographs, providing further evidence that this was the book used. Plate ninety-one from *First and Last*, for instance, has a dust particle to the left of the tree in the middle ground. This particle is evident in Levine's photograph. The same can be said with other printed imperfections visible in the plates of *First and Last*, as well as in Levine's suite. A scratch or some type of flaw in plate eighty-seven, for example, also appears in Levine's photograph.

It is unclear whether or not any of the images in *First and Last* could be from the same negatives as the images in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Evans's is known to have taken several pictures of the same subject, though all slightly different in composition. For example, four different negatives of Allie Mae Burroughs image exist. However the two in *First and Last* and *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* do appear to be from the same negative.[53] An analysis of Floyd Burroughs in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* and *First and Last* reveals that the two are different. The image of Floyd Burroughs in *First and Last* is sharply focused on his face, but his arms and the background are blurred. In contrast, the image of Burroughs in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* is entirely in focus, every detail of the tears in his shirt is clear and sharp (Plate 28). Like

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[52] The first edition of Agee's and Evans's book *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* was printed in 1941,though the second edition printed in 1960 is the "classic" known today. Nesbit states in her essay "Without Walls" that "the next year [1981)] she [Levine] made a series from the work Walker Evans did for his book with James Agee, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*." Nesbit, "Without Walls," 254.

[53] Rosenheim, "'The Cruel Radiance of What Is:' Walker Evans and the South," 89.

the images in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, some of those in the Library of Congress catalog are also compositionally different from those in *First and Last*. The image of Allie Mae in the LC catalog differs than that in *First and Last* (Plate 29). The position of her head has changed in the two images. At least thirteen of the twenty-two images Levine appropriated appear different than those in the Library of Congress catalog. The most drastic of these is Evans's image of a church interior in Alabama from 1936 (Plate 30). It is too difficult to discern if the remaining eight photographs are from the same negative in the Library of Congress or not. The photograph corresponding to *After Walker Evans: 18* is not in the LC catalog (Appendix).

A comparison of Levine's photographs with those in *First and Last* illustrates that the cropping and compositional details, including depth of field, of Evans's images matches those in the catalog published by his estate and not those in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. So while the subjects in Agee's and Evans's collaboration are the same as the images in Levine's photographs, only one or two of those published in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* may be from the actual negatives of the images she appropriated.[54] While some of Levine's images are insignificantly cropped around the edges, the majority of them do correspond to the cropping of those in *First and Last*, further supporting this as the source of her appropriations.

Her decision to appropriate what are some of Evans' most celebrated photographs rests on a number of factors. The most substantial is her assumption that the images were

[54] The images of Allie Mae, is likely the same in both *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* and *Walker Evans: First and Last*. It is likely that the following are also from the same negative: *Burroughs Kitchen, Hale County Alabama,* 1936 (plate 76 in *First and Last*), *Child's Grave, Hale County, Alabama*, 1936 (plate 82 in *First and Last*),. The following are difficult to tell due to cropping: *Burroughs Kitchen, Hale County, Alabama* 1936 (plate 77 in *First and Last*), *Fireplace, Burroughs House, Hale County Alabama*, 1936 (plate 79 in *First and Last*), *Landlord Moundville, Alabama* 1936 (plate 74 in *First and Last*).

in the public domain; an important consideration given the problems she encountered with the Weston Estate over her earlier photographs *After Edward Weston*.[55] Claiming Levine's act was a violation of copyright, the Weston Estate threatened to file suit. Since the images she photographed of Evans's were taken for the FSA project, she assumed they were in the public domain. However, the fact that Evans did not release all of the negatives to the FSA implies that, in fact, Levine actually appropriated some of Evans's images that legally belong to his Estate. This erroneous assumption later resulted in legal action from Evans's Estate, which prohibited Levine from selling any of the *After Walker Evans* images. But the issue was ultimately resolved when the Metropolitan Museum acquired Evans's Estate, and dropped the suit against Levine when she provided the Met with a complete set of the *After Walker Evans* suite.[56]

The basis of both Estate suits was surely influenced by amendments made to copyright law in 1976, which incorporated important changes to the 1909 act. First is the replacement of the phrase "all the writings of an author" with "original works of authorship."[57] This change served to clarify the broad scope covered by "all the writings of an author," which could include writings not original to the respective individual, as well a broader inclusion of works outside of literature. More importantly, though, is the establishment of the originality requirement under copyright. In the 1884 case Burrow-Giles Lithographic Co. v. Sarony, the United States Supreme Court held that photographs can be copyrighted as long as "they are representatives of original intellectual

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[55] Since the images Levine appropriated were part of the FSA project Evans participated in, Levine assumed, justifiably, that the images in *First and Last* were in the public domain. This was confirmed in the author's conversation with Jeff Rosenheim, Curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, on March 13, 2007.

[56] Author's conversation with Jeff Rosenheim, March 13, 2007.

[57] Margreth Barrett, *Intellectual Property: Cases and Materials*, (St. Paul, Minnesota: West Publishing Co., 1995), 359.

conceptions of the author."[58] The date of this decision, 1884, is significant given that photography was invented only forty-five years earlier, in 1839. The photograph in question, by Oscar Wilde, was held to be an "original work of art" and thereby laid the legal foundation for photography to be an accepted and copyrightable art form.[59] Following the changes made to copyright law in 1976 was a stricter enforcement of violations of copyright, which is evidenced in the reaction to Levine's photographs by both the Evans and Weston Estates.

Her appropriation of Evans's images, after threats from the Weston Estate, though, should not be seen merely as an alternative. She chose to photograph Evans's images for several reasons. She admired Evans's work and has stated that "one thing I'd like to make clear is that I make the things I want to make. I'm making the picture I want to look at which is what I think everybody [other artists] does."[60] At the same time, she did choose these images from Evans's work at the FSA, believing they were in the public domain.[61]

Levine's appropriation of Evans's images takes place only six years after his death in 1975. At least seven books or catalogs of, or about, Evans's work were published between the years of 1975 and 1981, including the source for her photographs, *First and Last*. It is perhaps not a coincidence that the same year Levine produced the Evans suite, Yale University, a relatively short distance from New York and where Evans taught for nearly ten years, held an exhibition of Evans's and Robert Frank's work.[62]

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[58] Barrett, *Intellectual Property*, 365.
[59] Ibid., 366.
[60] Siegel, "After Sherrie Levine," 142.
[61] Author's conversation with Jeff Rosenheim, March 13, 2007.
[62] Douglas Eklund, Maria Morris Hambourg, Mia Fineman, and Jeff L. Rosenheim, *Walker Evans*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), 310.

Another exhibition, *Walker Evans at* Fortune, at Wellesley College Museum occurred two years after Evans's death.[63] It is likely that Levine was aware of the Yale exhibition, suggesting that these events were factors in her decision to photograph Evans's photographs. In addition, there was a major 1971 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA), which put Evans back in the limelight. This major retrospective of Evans's work included the celebrated FSA photographs of the thirties.

Furthermore, Evans's established position as a significant figure in the history of photography and his increasing status as an artist in the mid-twentieth century surely played a role in Levine's decision to appropriate his work. Evans had a long-standing relationship with MoMA. As early as 1938, MoMA held a major solo exhibition of Evans's works along with the publication of an important monograph, *American Photographs*.[64] This exhibition was the museum's first dedicated entirely to a single photographer, and its first monographic show of a photographer. In 1945 Evans joined *Fortune* magazine as both writer and photographer.[65] Three years later MoMA exhibited several of Evans's Chicago street portraits that would be published the following year in *U.S. Camera Annual*. Indeed, part of Levine's choice to appropriate the works of Evans lies in his close relationship to the institution of the art museum. In fact, Evans status as a modernist figure in the history of art and photography rests in part on his relationship with the art museum, as well as his dedication to utilizing photography as medium of documentation.

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[63] Eklund, Hambourg, Fineman, and Rosenheim, *Walker Evans*, 310.

[64] John Szarkowski, "Introduction," in *Walker Evans* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1971), 15.

[65] Ibid, 18.

Sherrie Levine's Aura

The complexity of Levine's photographs in relation to Evans's original images is partly centered on what Walter Benjamin refers to as the aura of an authentic work of art. His influential 1936 essay, "The Work of Art in the Mechanical Age of Reproduction" is particularly relevant to Levine's *After Walker Evans* photographs. The premise of Benjamin's essay rests on his argument that "that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art."[66] In relation to Levine's work, the question that Benjamin's essay poses is: Does her work contain an aura?

Benjamin defines the aura as a work's "presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be."[67] It is a combination of its unique presence in the world, the imperfections that have occurred over time, the places it has been, and hands it has passed through. Moreover, though, the aura is something experiential. Benjamin equates it with an afternoon outing: "If, while resting on a summer afternoon, you follow with your eyes a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which casts its shadow over you, you experience the aura of those mountains, of that branch."[68] This likening elicits a desire to get close to, or even, to hold the object in your hands. To use Benjamin's example, it is the desire to touch the branch, to climb the mountain, and to hold the work of art. But the aura begins to disintegrate, as Benjamin argues, when an art work is mechanically reproduced, such as, in a photograph of a painting in a text book.

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[66] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (Brace, Harcourt, & World, 1968), 221.

[67] Ibid., 220.

[68] Ibid.," 222-223.

The dissolution of the aura through mechanical reproduction coincided with the rise of socialism, allowing the masses to experience art without having to go to a museum, separating art from its capitalistic ties. "Above all," Benjamin states, "it [mechanical reproduction] enables the original to meet the beholder halfway."[69] This aspect of mechanical reproduction was appreciated and advocated by Benjamin. Levine's rephotographing of Evans's images is doubly problematic given that Evans's "original" photographs are simultaneously mechanically reproduced and thought to have an auratic presence. Benjamin did attribute certain photographs with having an aura—portraits in particular. "It is no accident that the portrait was the focal point of early photography. The cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead, offers the last refuge for the cult value of the picture. For the last time aura emanates from the early photographs in the fleeting expression of a human face."[70]

The resulting destruction of the aura in Levine's appropriation can be approached in two ways, one being that Evans's aura persists through her rephotographing, the other, that it does not. In "Seeing Sherrie Levine," Howard Singerman writes of her work: "I had imagined . . . I would see a lack at the center of her work. But what Levine's frames marked out, what they staged even as they canceled it, was not the absence of Walker Evans, but the presence of his image."[71] And, in a later essay he notes, "There is a difference between the two images, or it might be more accurate to say that there is a space between them that constitutes a difference belonging to neither of them."[72] While at the same time Singerman acknowledges Evans's presence, he also suggests that

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[69] Benjamin, "Work of Art," 220.
[70] Ibid, 226.
[71] Singerman, "Seeing Sherrie Levine," 80.
[72] Singerman, "Sherrie Levine's Art History," 3.

Levine's act of appropriation in some way negates or cancels Evans's image. Therefore, he correctly implies that no aura exists in Levine's photographs. Furthermore, it is important to remember that when Levine photographed Evans's images, she photographed reproductions of the photographic prints published in a book, not the actual photograph by Evans.

Perhaps resulting from her rephotographing of Evans's images from book plates, Levine's photographs do not have an auratic presence. Their existence is much like that of a reproduction, which is exactly what they are—mechanical reproductions. There is no aesthetic quality exhibited, nor the slightest hint at the auratic presence Benjamin describes when discussing the presence of a tree or a mountain. Levine's photographs do not create any sense of awe. There is no desire to hold the work, as there is to touch the branch, or climb the mountain.

Benjamin's criticism of the authentic, original work of art, in part, rests on the original's limited accessibility, its existence in a single place. He asserts that "painting [or any other unique work of art] simply is in no position to present an object for simultaneous collective experience."[73] An advantageous aspect of mechanical reproduction, according to Benjamin, results from its ability to be viewed simultaneously, by more than one person at a time.

It is here that Levine's works deviate most significantly from Benjamin's idea of an art that is available to the masses. Her photographs necessitate the institution. Levine's works require the title card displayed next to the photograph. Without this vital information, her photographs appear to be either an edition of Evans's "originals" or mere copies, rather than appropriations. The viewer must bring the knowledge of the

[73] Benjamin, "Work of Art," 235.

history of Evans's works, as well as recognize what it is exactly that Levine has done: taken photographs of Evans's images. As Abigail Solomon-Godeau states, "It goes without saying that Levine's work . . . could make its critique visible only within the compass of the art world. Outside of this specialized site, a Sherrie Levine could just as well be . . . a 'genuine' Walker Evans."[74] Singerman goes so far as to state that her works are "gallery works; they need the information and audience the gallery provides."[75]

The emphasis on place with regard to Levine's photographs is at first seemingly problematic when one considers their reproduction in an art history text-book. While very few survey texts include her work, the few that do typically provide an illustration of her *After Walker Evans: 4*, 1981, of Allie Mae (Plate 31). In this context the text-book works like a gallery or museum. It provides all the necessary information to understand her works and the critiques of ownership and representation she explores, including Evans's FSA photographs and the history of his images. Furthermore, her inclusion in the survey texts also serves as another form of acceptance into the history of art, which is also part of her critique.

Ownership and Representation: Issues of Power

In an interview with Jeanne Siegel, Levine remarked, "It's not that I'm trying to deny that people own things. That isn't even the point. The point is that people *want* to own things, which is more interesting to me. What does it mean to own something, and stranger still what does it mean to own an image?"[76] Levine's interest in dealing with

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[74] Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Living with Contradictions: Critical Practices in the Age of Supply-Side Aesthetics" in *The Critical Image: Essays on Contemporary Photography*, ed. Carol Squiers, (Seattle: Bay Press, 1990), 62.

[75] Howard Singerman, "Sherrie Levine, Richard Kuhlenschmidt Gallery," *Artforum* 22 (September 1983): 80. When Singerman uses the term "gallery" he is including the museum.

[76] Siegel, "After Sherrie Levine," 142. I am using "image" in this context, the same way it is referred to earlier on page 13, as the image within a photograph and not the photograph itself.

issues of ownership is one of the more alluring aspects of the *After Walker Evans* suite. An assertion of ownership with regard to appropriation can be a loaded claim. In the last part of her comment to Siegel, Levine asks a perplexing question: what does it mean to own an image? More importantly, I would ask, can an image be owned? Recalling the strict definition of an image as the subject matter within a photograph, not the photograph itself, there must be the acknowledgment that an image cannot tangibly exist in the world. It is ephemeral in the sense that it can only be "pictured" through a photograph or other form of representation. The true critique in Levine's appropriation is one which confronts the viewer, asking: whose images are these really?

The distinction between ownership and authorship rests on a very fine line. Both Evans and Levine hold a claim of authorship over their respective photographs, in the sense that they each produced prints. Generally ownership implies possession of something that belongs to or is the property of the owner. It is the authorial nature of ownership, however, that is of concern in Levine's photographs. In postmodern discourse, the role of the author is treated with a decreased significance, particularly in terms of his or her status as meaning-giver. Modernism held that to create something implied that the creator was also the maker of meaning of his or her creation. In his 1968 essay "The Death of the Author," Roland Barthes calls our attention to the erroneous assumption that "the explanation of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the *author* 'confiding' in us."[77]

[77] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image-Music-Text* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1978), 143.

Barthes demonstrates that the viewer/reader is the "space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's [or work of art's] unity lies not in its origin but in its destination."[78] Following Barthes's reasoning, the viewer/reader is the site where the work is inscribed and, therefore, also becomes the locale where meaning is assigned. As such, the author/creator is no longer the meaning-giver; this task is handed to the viewer/reader. "A text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God)," Barthes explains, "but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture."[79]

In Levine's photographs her role as producer has no affect on the viewer's understanding of the work. Rather, it is her act that is acknowledged in her photographs. The appropriation of Evans's images could have been carried out by Cindy Sherman, Louise Lawler, Barbara Kruger, with the same results. The viewer's acknowledgement of the act of appropriation, and comprehension of its ramifications, is what the work is about, which is why it is difficult, if not impossible, to look at one of her *After Walker Evans* photographs and not think of Levine's appropriation. Levine's photographs are no longer images of sharecroppers, rural scenes, or aspects of American culture; rather, they exist as images that document the act of appropriation.

Barthes's position requires that every creative act be viewed as a referent to something which already exists (an inherent quality in the photographic medium), thereby implying every work's *un*originality. His claim is affirmed in Levine's work by

[78] Barthes, "Death of the Author," 148.
[79] Ibid., 146.

Johanna Burton, who states that Levine "undermined modern myths of mastery by baldly re-presenting high-art images without the camouflage of 'originality.'"[80] Just as Evans's photographs are referents to individuals, places, and things which already exist, so, too, do Levine's photographs evoke his photographic images. As Burton explains, Levine's photographs are unoriginal. At their most basic level, they exist as nothing more that reproductions of Evans's photographs.

The issue of unoriginality is also addressed in Douglas Crimp's 1980 essay "The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism." Crimp's discussion of Levine's *After Edward Weston* photographs (and, by implication, the Evans suite), contends that, "in their [Levine, Sherman, and others in the "Pictures Generation"] work, the original cannot be located, it is always deferred; even the self which might have generated an original is shown to be itself a copy."[81] Take, for example, the image of Allie Mae photographed by Evans, and later appropriated by Levine in 1981 (Plate 32). Evans's photograph is a representation of something, an impoverished wife of a tenant farmer, which is itself a representation of something: poverty.[82] Just as, Rosalind Krauss argues in "Photography's Discursive Spaces: Landscape/View" from 1982, a system was created which pre-determined the "view" of the landscape depicted in photography by nineteenth-century landscape painting, so too, is the image of Allie Mae, a representation

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[80] Johanna Burton, "Subject to Revision," *Artforum* 43 (October, 2004): 258.

[81] Douglas Crimp, "The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism," *October,* no. 15 (Winter, 1980): 98.

[82] Representation, though, should not be confused with simulation. Simulation is the "generation by are models of a real without origin or reality: a hyper-real."[82] The photographic images Levine appropriated based on something real; they do have an origin (Evans's photographs, which themselves originate from the real world). See Jean Baudrillard's essay "The Procession of Simulacra," in *Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988).

of something pre-ordained.[83] The representation of "the poor" exists prior to Evans's photographs of poor sharecroppers.

Authorship, then, becomes an issue of representation. The question is no longer who owns the imagery within the photograph, but who owns the representation of the image. It would be absurd for Evans or Levine to claim that either of them owns the face of Floyd Burroughs. Rather, Evans and Levine assert ownership over the representations depicted in their photographs. We, as viewers, must take caution when making a distinction between ownership and authorship in Levine's photographs. While she asserts ownership over the representations in her photographs, she is not assuming the role of Author-God, as discussed by Barthes.

Writer Craig Owens specifies that Levine's photographs, in their critique of representation, "use representation against itself to challenge its authority, its claim to possess some truth or epistemological value."[84] His critique of representation relates to poststructuralist theory, which "demonstrates that it [representation] is an inextricable part of social processes of domination and control."[85] Indeed, one function of Levine's photographs is to expose the excessive power of images in American culture. Through her rephotographing and *re*-presentation, the viewer is able to acknowledge two things: the impossibility of an original image in our image-saturated culture; and, that only

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[83] Rosalind Krauss, "Photography's Discursive Spaces: Landscape/View," *Art Journal*, 42 (Winter 1982): 315.

[84] Craig Owens, *Beyond Recognition*: *Representation, Power, and Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), 88.

[85] Ibid. On page 91 Owens states that poststructuralist criticism is "an adversarial criticism, conceived in opposition to a dominant cultural order that isolates knowledge into various branches, each endowed with its own object of study and methodological instruments."

through representation can one approach the subject of the Other (Woman, Poverty, Nature).[86]

In his critique of Western domination, Owens argues that representation is an integral part of social and cultural structures. As such, it becomes part of a system inscribed with domination and subjugation—domination, in the sense that representations of everyone/everything effectively replace their true existence in society and culture.[87] Resulting from representation's ability to overthrow the real, Owens asserts that representation "is not—nor can it be—neutral; it is an act—indeed, the founding act—of power in our [American] culture."[88] By questioning the nature of representation, Levine also questions the position of power in our culture, a position that culminates in an allocation of ownership.

By means of ownership, representation "communicates with power via the medium of possession."[89] The motives of art history, as determined by possession, are described by Owens as "a desire for *property*, which conveys a man's sense of his 'power over things;' a desire for *propriety*, a standard of decorum based upon respect for property relations; a desire for the *proper name*, which designates the specific person who is invariably identified as the subject of the work of art; finally, a desire for *appropriation*."[90] The desire to own, through its stages of manifestation, results in an act of appropriation. It therefore confers power to the taker, confiscator, or appropriator.

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[86] Owens, "Sherrie Levine at A&M Artworks," 115.
[87] Owens, *Beyond Recognition*, 91.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid., 95.
[90] Ibid., 95-96.

Stating his case, Owens claims that "representation is thus defined as appropriation and is thereby constituted as an apparatus of power."[91]

In another essay, "The Discourse of Others: Feminism and Postmodernisms," Owens remarks that "Marxism privileges the characteristically masculine activity of production as the *definitively human* activity."[92] His theoretical and social relegation of women to places "outside the society of male producers," which he supports through Marxist discourse, is an important critique conveyed by Levine's appropriation of Evans's images. Coinciding with the primacy of the male artists that the institutionalization that modernism established is, indeed, part of Levine's critique and, not insignificantly, where Evans is historically situated.

In her reproductions, Levine challenges the institution of the museum and gallery, one that historically has excluded women, to include her by reproducing works the institution has already accepted. As a result, her appropriation becomes an act that is re-productive. Modernism is configured as a system of power that "authorizes certain representations while blocking, prohibiting, or invalidating others."[93] What arose out of postmodernism, as Owens states, is the emergence of a "specifically feminist practice."[94] Accomplished in this practice is the revelation of modernism's privileging of the male authored work of art. Levine's re-production of Evans's images reveals modernism's biases.

In a discussion of her *After Walker Evans* photographs, Owens comments that "Levine's disrespect for paternal authority suggests that her activity is less one of

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[91] Owens, *Beyond Recognition*, 104.
[92] Ibid, 172.
[93] Ibid., 168.
[94] Ibid., 170.

appropriation – and more one of expropriation: she expropriates the appropriators [Evans, Porter, and Weston]."[95] By confiscating Evans's work and that of other photographers, she takes possession of their place in the history of art, not just their images. Although Owens's point is accurate, Levine does not, literally, take Evans's place in the history of art. (Her critique of issues of ownership, representation, power, and the male artist is further supported by her choice to only photograph and make work "after" male artists.) Evans's images are subverted from their historical place of patriarchal privilege.[96]

Conclusion

Twenty-six years after its creation, Levine's *After Walker Evans* suite offers as compelling a critique of the issues of ownership, representation, and originality as it did in 1981. Yet, with their aging, and the direction Levine's work has taken, the photographs are less a critique of the male author-producer, and more an assessment that famous artists are historically, at least until recently, always male. Supporting this assessment is the lack of attention given to Levine's and Sherman's role in furthering the acceptance of women in the art world.

However, it is the direction Levine's career has taken that is most pertinent in any current discussion of her works. Her statement that "I make the things I want to make. I'm making the picture I want to look at which is what I think everybody [other artists] does," has more of an impact today, than in the early eighties, when just beginning her career.[97] Her continuation of making works "after" an artist is less of a critique of his or her status and acceptance in the history of art (she is still working "after" male artists),

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[95] Owens, *Beyond Recognition*, 182.

[96] At the same time, though, Levine is also paying homage to the individuals whose work she appropriates, arguably reinforcing their status as important cultural images.

[97] Siegel, "After Sherrie Levine," 142.

and more of an homage to some of the most celebrated artists in the world's history. As Singerman comments, "she works increasingly . . . as an art historian."[98] By choosing artists that she admires and those who have influenced her own work, Levine constructs an art history lesson for her viewers, in her body of work. Her oeuvre visually demonstrates the history of art as she sees it.

Her works "after" various artists require a great deal of knowledge on the part of the viewer. This is clearly evident in her *After Walker Evans* suite. As demonstrated in this thesis, the source and background of her photographic appropriations provides a history lesson for the viewer. This information becomes relevant when approaching an *After Walker Evans* print by Levine. While it is possible to "get" her photographs at the moment they are viewed, the history of Evans's images, his relationship with the United States government, and the circumstances surrounding the images she appropriated, make her photographs richer, and more captivating than any initial appreciation.

With their acceptance into the institution, most recently by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and their inclusion in *The Last Picture Show*, Levine's work has reached a higher point of critique than it did in 1981. After all, the photographs have been accepted by the very institution they serve to critique. The photographs continue to successfully challenge the issues they initially questioned—ownership, representation, and originality. And they continue to perpetuate postmodernism's challenge to originality and representation. Today, in 2007, they continue to mark an important artistic moment in the twentieth century.

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[98] Howard Singerman, "Sherrie Levine's Art History," *October*, no. 101 (Summer, 2002), 96.

Plate 1. Sherrie Levine, *Shoe Sale (Detail)*, 1977

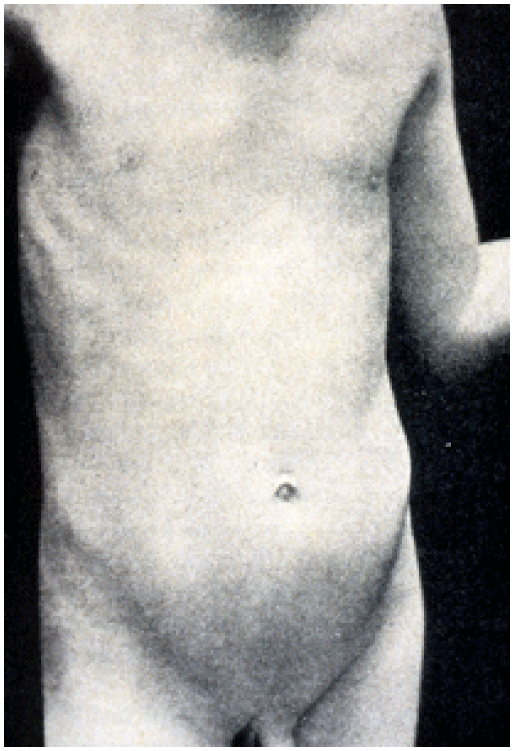


Plate 2. Levine, *After Edward Weston*, 1980

Plate 3. Levine, *After Claude Monet*, 1982

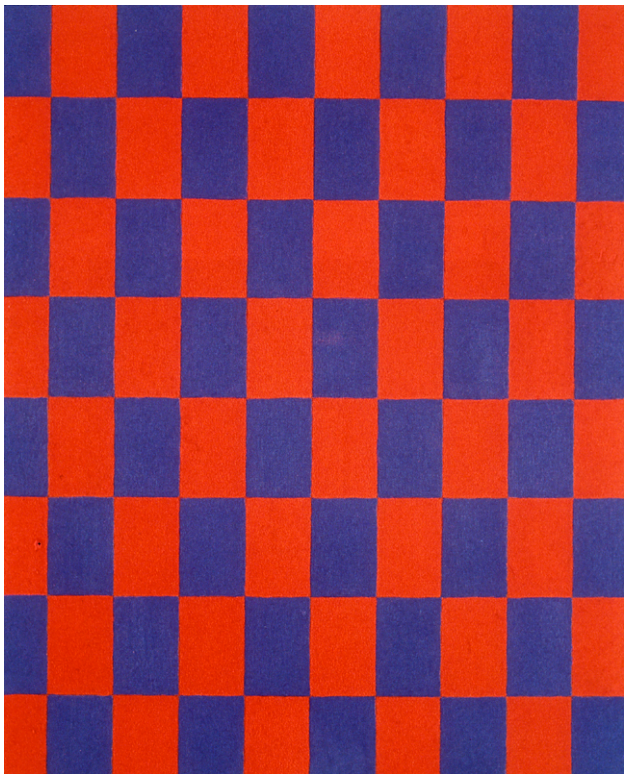


Plate 4. Levine, *Check #9*, 1986

Plate 5. Levine, *Gold Knots*, 1985

Plate 6. Levine, *Fountain (After Marcel Duchamp)*, 1991

Plate 7. Levine, *La Fortune (After Man Ray)*,1991

Plate 8. Installation shot, 18 of the 22 *After Walker Evans* photographs
Courtesy of the Walker Art Center, 2003

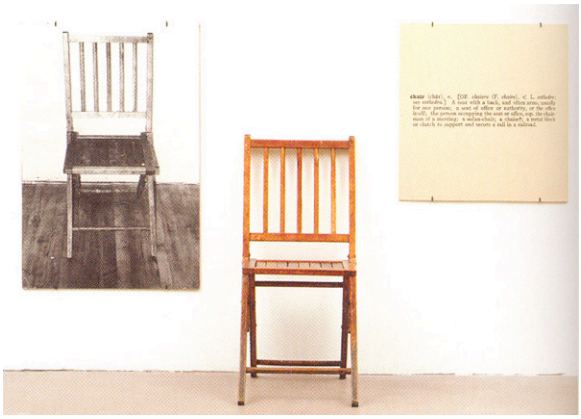


Plate 9. Joseph Kosuth, *One and Three Chairs*, 1965

Plate 10. Vito Acconci, *Step Piece*, 1970

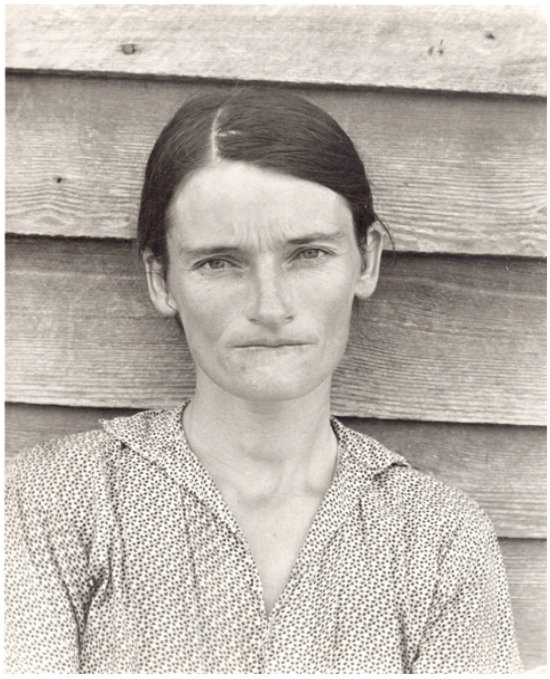


Plate 11. Evans, *Allie Mae Burroughs, Hale County Alabama*, 1936

Plate 12. Richard Prince, *Untitled (cowboy)*, 1990

Plate 13. Levine, *After Alexandr Rodchenko*, 1985

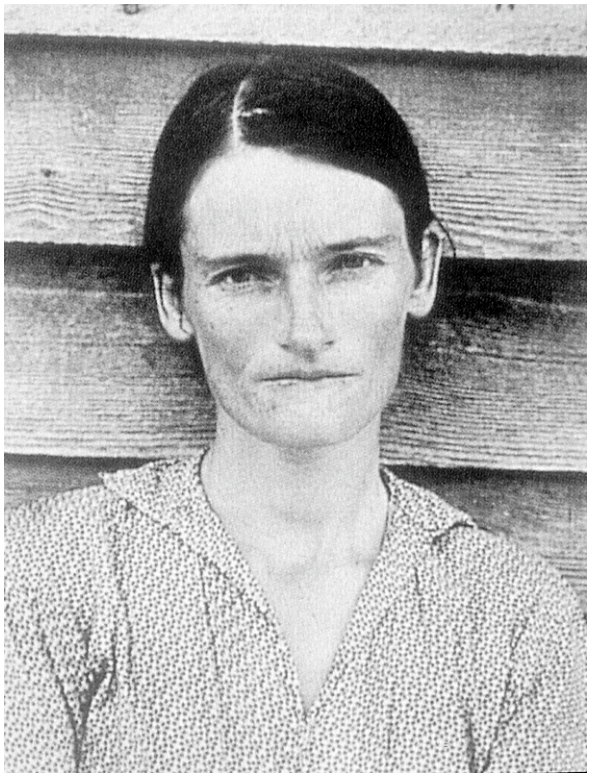


Plate 14. Levine, *After Walker Evans*: 4, 1981

Plate 15. Levine, *After Walker Evans: 3*, 1981

Plate 16. Levine, *After Walker Evans: 17*, 1981

Plate 17. Levine, *After Walker Evans: 5*, 1981

Plate 18. Levine, *Untitled (President: 2)*, 1979

Plate 19. Richard Prince, *Untitled (living rooms)*, 1977

Plate 20. Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917, photograph by Alfred Stieglitz

Plate 21. John Baldessari, *A Directional Piece Where People Are Looking (with R,V,G, Variants and Ending with Yellow),* 1972-1973

Plate 22. Baldessari, *Blasted Allegories*, 1978

Plate 23. Jasper Johns, *White Flag*, 1955

Plate 24. Robert Rauschenberg, *Skyway*, 1964

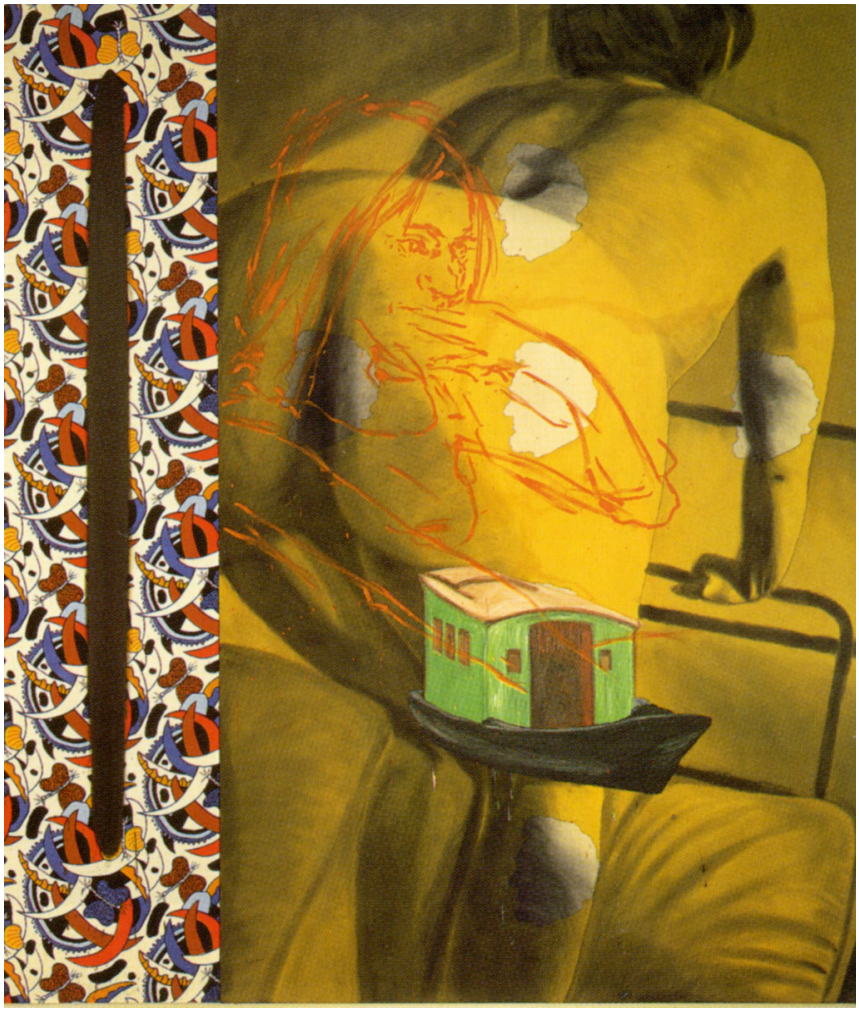
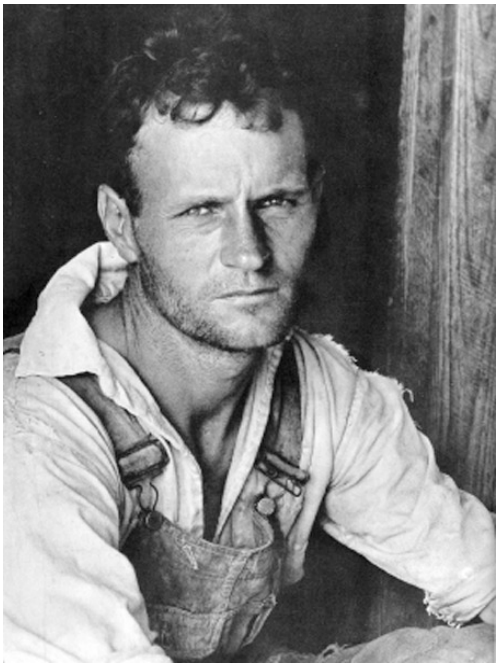


Plate 25. David Salle, *His Brain* 1984

Plate 26. Louise Lawler and Levine, *A Picture is No Substitute for Anything,* 1982

Plate 27. Walker Evans, *Burroughs Family, Hale County, Alabama*, 1936.

Plate 28. Walker Evans, *Floyd Burroughs*, 1936,
from *First and Last*



Walker Evans, *Floyd Burroughs*, 1936,
from *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*

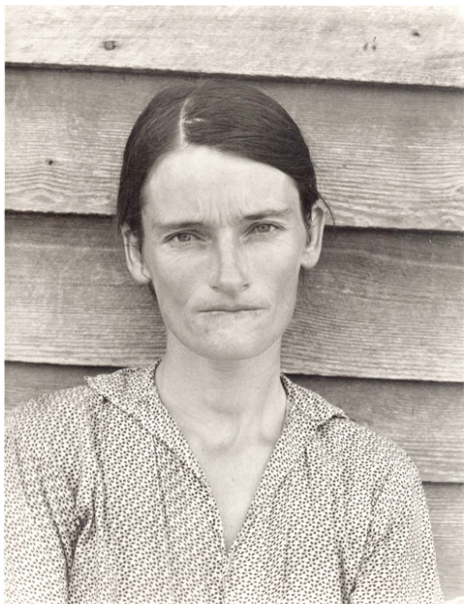
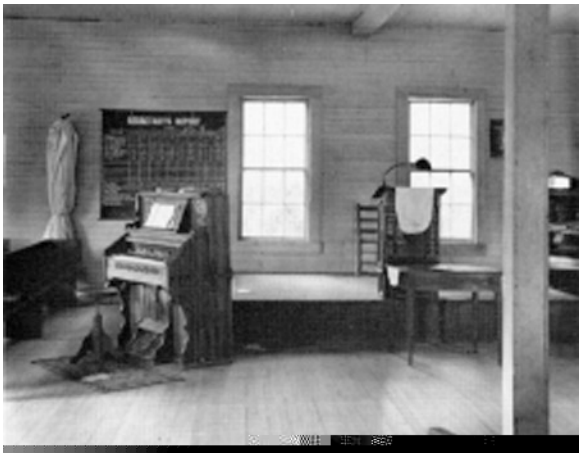


Plate 29. Walker Evans, *Allie Mae Burroughs*, 1936
from *Walker Evans: First and Last*

Walker Evans, *Allie Mae Burroughs,* 1936
from *Library of Congress Catalog*

Plate 30. Walker Evans, *Church Interior*, 1936
from *First and Last*



Walker Evans, *Church Interior*, 1936
from *Library of Congress Catalog*

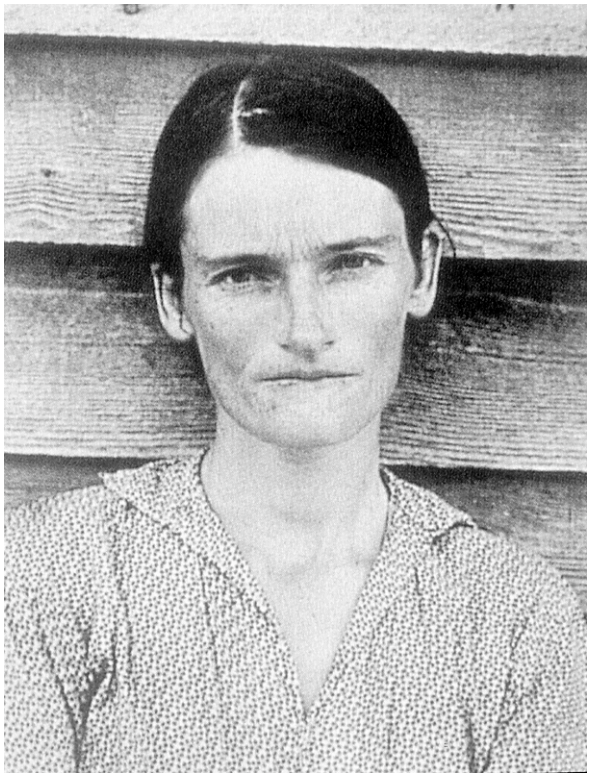


Plate 31. Sherrie Levine, *After Walker Evans*: 4, 1981

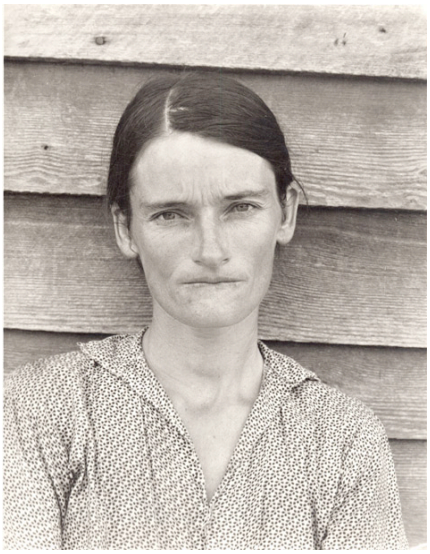


Plate 32. Walker Evans, *Allie Mae Burroughs, Hale County Alabama*, 1936

APPENDIX

Sherrie Levine: *After Walker Evans* Suite

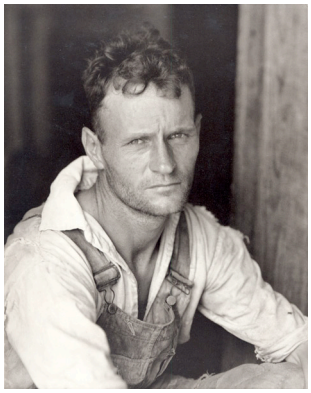
After Walker Evans: 1, 1981; Gelatin-silver print, 8.6 x 12.9 cm
Corresponds to plate 81, *Walker Evans: First and Last* (below)

Floyd Burroughs and Tengle Children, Hale County, Alabama, 1936

After Walker Evans: 2, 1981; Gelatin-silver print, 9.6 x 12.8 cm
Corresponds to plate 75, *Walker Evans: First and Last* (below)

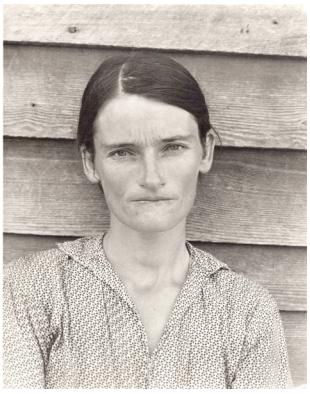
Burroughs Family, Hale County, Alabama, 1936

After Walker Evans: 3, 1981; Gelatin-silver print, 12.8 x 9.8 cm
Corresponds to plate 72, *Walker Evans: First and Last* (below)



Floyd Burroughs, Hale County, Alabama, 1936

After Walker Evans: 4, 1981; Gelatin-silver print, 12.8 x 9.8 cm
Corresponds to plate 73, *Walker Evans: First and Last* (below)



Allie May Burroughs, Hale County, Alabama, 1936

After Walker Evans: 5, 1981; Gelatin-silver print, 12.8 x 9.8 cm
Corresponds to plate 74, *Walker Evans: First and Last* (below)

Landlord, Moundville, Alabama, 1936

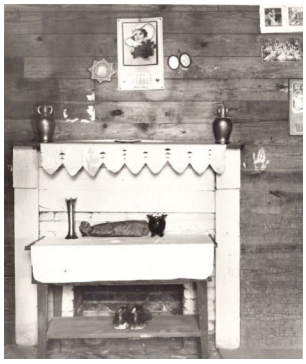
After Walker Evans: 6, 1981; Gelatin-silver print, 9.8 x 12.6 cm
Corresponds to plate 112, *Walker Evans: First and Last* (below)

Coal Miner's House, West Virginia, 1935

After Walker Evans: 7, 1981; Gelatin-silver print, 12.8 x 9.8 cm
Corresponds to plate 76, *Walker Evans: First and Last* (below)

Burroughs Kitchen, Hale County, Alabama, 1936

After Walker Evans: 8, 1981; Gelatin-silver print, 12.9 x 10 cm
Corresponds to plate 79, *Walker Evans: First and Last* (below)



Fireplace, Burroughs House, Hale County, Alabama, 1936

After Walker Evans: 10, 1981; Gelatin-silver print, 9.6 x 12.7 cm
Corresponds to plate 89, *Walker Evans: First and Last* (below)

Church Interior, Alabama, 1936

After Walker Evans: 11, 1981; Gelatin-silver print, unknown
Corresponds to plate 77, *Walker Evans: First and Last* (below)

Burroughs Kitchen, Hale County, Alabama, 1936

After Walker Evans: 12, 1981; Gelatin-silver print, unknown
Corresponds to plate 90, *Walker Evans: First and Last* (below)

Negro Houses, Outskirts of Tupelo, Mississippi, 1936

After Walker Evans: 13, 1981; Gelatin-silver print, 10.1 x 12.8 cm
Corresponds to plate 80, *Walker Evans: First and Last* (below)

Floyd Burroughs, Hale County, Alabama, 1936

After Walker Evans: 14, 1981; Gelatin-silver print, 9.8 x 12.8 cm
Corresponds to plate 91, *Walker Evans: First and Last* (below)

Soil Erosion, Near Jackson, Mississippi, 1936

After Walker Evans: 15, 1981; Gelatin-silver print, 10 x 12.8 cm
Corresponds to plate 82, *Walker Evans: First and Last* (below)

Child's Grave, Hale County, Alabama, 1936

After Walker Evans: 16, 1981; Gelatin-silver print, 10.1 x 12.9 cm
Corresponds to plate 83, *Walker Evans: First and Last* (below)

Child's Grave, Hale County, Alabama, 1936

After Walker Evans: 17, 1981; Gelatin-silver print, 9.8 x 12.8 cm
Corresponds to plate 87, *Walker Evans: First and Last* (below)

Church, Southeastern U.S., 1936

After Walker Evans: 18, 1981; Gelatin-silver print, 9.8 x 12.8 cm
Corresponds to plate 86, *Walker Evans: First and Last* (below)

Church, Southeastern U.S., 1936

After Walker Evans: 19, 1981; Gelatin-silver print, 12.9 x 10.4 cm
Corresponds to plate 84, *Walker Evans: First and Last* (below)

Country Church, South Carolina, 1936

After Walker Evans: 20, 1981; Gelatin-silver print, 9.8 x 12.8 cm
Corresponds to plate 88, *Walker Evans: First and Last* (below)

Church, Southeastern U.S., 1936

After Walker Evans: 21, 1981: Gelatin-silver print, unknown
Corresponds to plate 85, *Walker Evans: First and Last* (below)

Country Church, South Carolina, 1936

After Walker Evans: 22, 1981; Gelatin-silver print, 9.6 x 12.7 cm
Corresponds to plate 92, *Walker Evans: First and Last* (below)

Display Sign, Birmingham, Alabama, 1936

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ABSTRACT

Few female artists have received as much critical reception as New York based artist Sherrie Levine. Her best known works, the *After Walker Evans* suite, is partially responsible for the increased attention given to issues of originality, authorship, ownership, and representation in art criticism and theory. Levine's source for her appropriations has, until now, been given little to no attention by historians and critics. However, it is an important aspect of her work. Furthermore, the book and history of Evans's images provide additional insight into the totality of Levine's critiques of ownership, institutional acceptance of male artists, and commodification.

This thesis is an attempt to demonstrate that the source of Levine's appropriation is an important detail of her work. It involves a discussion of numerous issues in Levine's *After Walker Evans* suite, such as the difference between readymades and appropriation, the history of Evans's Farm Security Administration photographs, a focused section dedicated to the issue of auratic works, and ownership and representation.