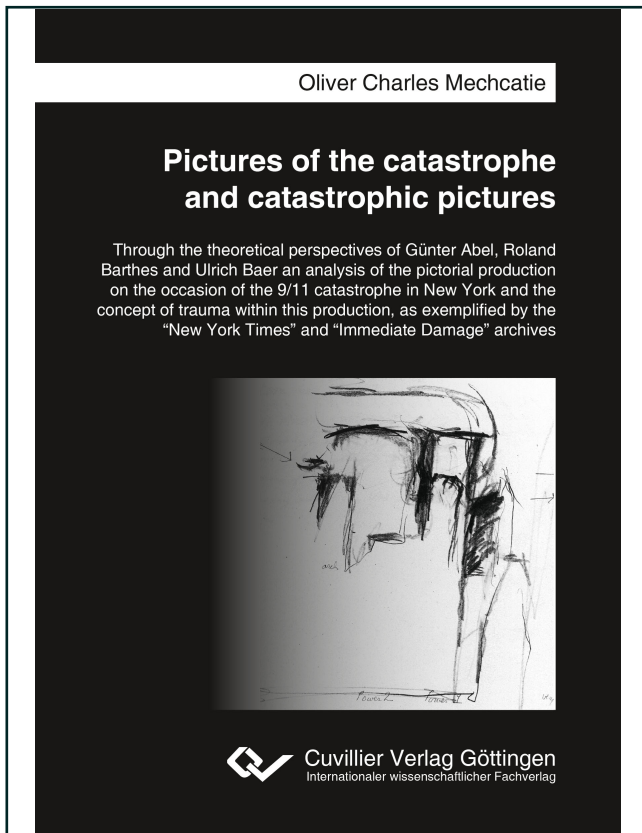




Oliver Mechcatie (Autor)

**Pictures of the catastrophe and catastrophic pictures**

Through the theoretical perspectives of Günter Abel, Roland Barthes and Ulrich Baer an analysis of the pictorial production on the occasion of the 9/11 catastrophe in New York and the concept of trauma within this production, as exemplified by the “New York Times” and “Immediate Damage” archives



<https://cuvillier.de/de/shop/publications/7280>

Copyright:  
Cuvillier Verlag, Inhaberin Annette Jentsch-Cuvillier, Nonnenstieg 8, 37075 Göttingen,  
Germany  
Telefon: +49 (0)551 54724-0, E-Mail: [info@cuvillier.de](mailto:info@cuvillier.de), Website: <https://cuvillier.de>



## **Table of contents**

### **Abbreviations 12**

### **Introduction: A general statement concerning The New York Times and Immediate Damage as two “communities of images” 13**

Example. Picasso cut-out and pedestrians fleeing: The first two pages of “The Arts Page” E1 & E2 on 9/13 **14**

The first gap: The step from the photograph as analogous reproduction *to* the art work *to* a pictorial sign of reality **28**

The second gap: Going beyond the ‘just there’ in the photograph **32**

Example: Pictorial descriptions of the A1 9/12 and a Portraits of Grief page of the New York Times **42**

A general description of the first page of the New York Times catastrophic production **42**

A detailed description of the A1 headline photograph **45**

Structural overlapping of the Brooklyn Bridge and the World Trade Center Towers **46**

The ‘empty’ area between the two Towers **47**

The suspension of the bridge and the area beneath it **48**

Summary of the general description of the first page of the New York Times catastrophic production **48**

The Portraits of Grief (the PoGs): Emergence and crystallization **49**

Example. Two covered faces: the fireman of A1 9/13 and the veiled woman of A19 9/13 as beginning indicators of the development of the Portraits of Grief page **50**

The posters become grief: A8 of 9/14 & p.6 of 9/16 **57**

A1 9/12 is brought into comparison with A11 9/15, the first Portraits of Grief column **60**

The pyramid-like hat as motif **64**

## **Focusing on Abel, Barthes and Baer 66**

### **Part I: Focus on Günter Abel 68**

The inevitable loss of the immediacy of the pictorial sign and the pictorial sign as being differentiated from, but invariably influenced by, the spoken sign **69**

The world-picture as a state of contingency as a heightened element in the pictorial sign **70**

Meaning *something* **73**

The 9/11 pictorial production as being 'in the act of' **74**

The pictorial sign hangs in the museum and the picture marks the exit **75**

The pictorial sign within the framework of the pictorial turn within a textual culture and the 'bringing up' of the 'background' of the world picture in order to see **78**

The 'bringing up' as a kind of jarring of the perception **79**

The space in which the spoken and unspoken sign meet **79**

Art history as the science of this meeting between the spoken and the unspoken pictorial sign **81**

Polarizing the possibilities inherent within the pictorial sign within the context of the pictorial turn **83**

Seeing is doing **85**

### **Part II: Focus on Günter Abel and Roland Barthes 87**

Introduction to key concepts used in Abel's "Zeichen der Wirklichkeit" **88**

Abel and the background **90**

The state of suspension **90**

Navigating between the transformed photograph, the evidentiary photograph and the faded photograph in the 9/11 productions focused here **94**

The daguerrotype as photographic essence **96**

Denotational aspects of the photograph **97**

The realization of the photograph as pictorial sign in terms of the ineffable and the denotational as carrying aspects of the trauma as a corrective in seeing **98**

The sign of reality/*Das Zeichen der Realität* **99**

The 'how' of the ipso facto sign **100**



Commonalities between Barthes and Abel **102**

Trauma and the daguerrotype **104**

System of interpretation **105**

Abel's use of the concept of exemplification and the Barthian detail **106**

Examples: The realization of the photograph as illustration and as art as a fundamental contradiction **107**

The immediacy of time and place and the lost sign **108**

The ineffable as an affixing state of suspension **109**

A further explication of Abel's concept of the ineffable **112**

The trauma of interpretation **117**

Further questions **120**

Developing the application of the trauma concept further through the application of Werner Bohleber **121**

Werner Bohleber's overview of the trauma concept **123**

Moving the trauma concept into pictures **125**

The Portraits of Grief as the 'mute zones' **125**

Conclusion **128**

### **Part III: Focus on Roland Barthes 129**

The setting-up of analogies between pop art, art photography and the naked photograph **130**

"That Old Thing, Art..." **130**

Barthes' characterization of pop art **130**

Pop art as offering parallels with the photograph **131**

The meaning of the image and the photograph as pop art **133**

The essence of the essence held in analogy between photography and pop art **137**

A1 9/12 as launching a 'play' of meaning **139**

Evidence as the return to meaning in the portrait **141**

Kitsch as seeing **142**



The degree of aesthetic intensity as a “carnival of contradictions” **143**

The (re-)emergence of naiveté as a pure seeing **144**

The carnival of contradictions **145**

The glowing limb in the New York Times **146**

#### **Part IV: Focus on Ulrich Baer 149**

Baer’s orientation towards Barthes and his explication of the trauma in the pictorial description **149**

Baer’s descriptive analysis of ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ photographs of the Holocaust in relation to the pictorial analysis carried out in relation to 9/11 **153**

Baer’s approach to the primary photograph (or those taken during the Holocaust) and what this orientation has to offer the pictorial analyses **155**

An early interpretation of history applied to the concept of trauma and photography as the medium to express this trauma within the frame of the historical **158**

Flatness versus frontality as the illustration versus the realization of the evidentiary force of photography **160**

Looking back as the detail which pricks **161**

The Democritean “swirl of atoms in a void” as a state of suspension in pictorial terms **164**

The world picture as suspended between being confirmed by the pictorial production or being defined by a serial production, which determines it as a compound picture reducible to its parts **167**

The Portraits of Grief as expressed in the terms laid out above as the expression of the trauma in the pictorial production **169**

The Portraits of Grief as a compound picture **170**

The Portraits of Grief as necessarily complementary forms to A1 9/12 of the New York Times in the dynamics of the pictorial production as outlined here **171**

Mario Erdheim and the implosion of the ‘mechanism’ of identification within the social hierarchy **174**

The place of the aesthetic component in the evocation of the trauma **177**

## **Conclusion: Final points 178**

Example. The 'Manet photo': The 'faded illustration' between A1 9/12 and the definitive Portraits of Grief page **181**

B14 9/21 as a memorialization that involves a monumentalization of motifs as a painting **182**

Example. Manet before the vanishing point area: The recessive feminine versus the canalized framing of the feminine in choreographed militaristic forms through a comparison between B14 9/21 and a feature photograph on the Portraits of Grief page of B15 9/21 **185**

## **Sources 190**

Printed sources **190**

Pictorial sources **195**

Electronic sources **195**

## **List of figures 196**

## **Figures 205**