Photography was one of the first technologies of representation to function on the basis of a robust distributed communications model, and it was perfectly tailored for the development of a panhuman memory bank in an age when industrial capitalism's communications and transportations systems and logic of socio-economic fragmentation began to transform the landscape and society through their capacity to promote the rapid movement of people and things. It was also the most appropriate one, given its economy of means and its 'universally' accessible visual language, its complex relationships to space and time, and its capacity to organize and transmit information in an infinite variety of fixed or transitory patterns. This basic *distributed* visual logic allowed it to bear witness to the dislocationary violence upon which it and industrial capitalism were founded. Photography's capacity to expand and continuously renew the forms of its image products and its distributed communication network draws continuous attention to the relationships and tensions between the possible and impossible, the tangible and intangible, which are at the foundation of our social world. However, we have yet to acknowledge the enormous impact that a post-1839 photographic epistemology, its panhuman distributed logic and the allusive fictional potential of the phantom system of intervals upon which it is based have had on the history and evolution not only of the panhuman but also of the posthuman.

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Projections, 2006-2011

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November 9 – December 14, 2013

The Photographic Interval and its Allusive Potential

The penetration of cameras into the most diverse of cultures around the planet and the wide-ranging circulation of photographs within and across them during the past 200 years suggests that photography has served, until recently, as a privileged medium for the preservation and archiving of visual information in a global context. While it shared its archival and mnemonic functions with cinema in the twentieth century, by the millennium's final decade, photography's fundamental democratic position of being the ubiquitous source of a society's image culture had largely been superseded by new electronically based media such as the computer, cell phone and Internet. Convergence had created a new category of communication-imaging-transmission system that was able to operate more efficiently and flexibly in the context of swiftly evolving and rapidly fragmenting post-industrial societies, where each person was also increasingly conceived as a citizen of a worldwide network of cultures that were bound together by interlocking communications and

transportations infrastructures. However, in contrast to the channeled transportational fluidity of images that travel by way of electronic media, traditional analogue or chemically-mediated photographs can be considered to be autonomous packets of data that operate as 'free agents,' even though they can also function as nodes in a structured relationship to each other and to other image types.

Paul Baran, the Polish born American computer network pioneer, presented three communications models in an important paper on distributed communications networks that was published by the Rand Corporation in 1962. The first was a centralized model, the second a decentralized model and the third was a networked model. Baran's paper addressed the problem of developing a communications network that was robust enough to withstand nuclear attack. He proposed an answer in the form of a distributed communications model where networks constructed on the basis of packet-switching technology could transmit units of data along pathways laid out according to a decentralized organizational logic. It is of some theoretical interest to note that photographs also function according to a distributed communication model, but in this case, the links between photographic 'nodes' are, for the most part, intangible. They are, more often than not, mentally as opposed to physically linked.

Even though they can be related together according to criteria of newsworthiness or significant family events, etc., chemically based photographs (including digital photographs that have been 'printed out' of their electronic environments) are frequently organized and distributed by way of randomly deployed, predominantly invisible and ephemeral (often mentally mediated) communications networks. However, in both cases, they serve as the elements of a collective panhuman memory that is organized in a distributed fashion, where each physical 'packet of information,' or cluster of packets, is deployed or can travel through space independently of standard hardwired electric or electronic communication systems. Perhaps the best way to understand how photographs relate together in an immaterial network of this kind is not through the concept of physical links, as in the case of hardwired communication systems, but in terms of spatial *intervals* where the 'negative' space between photographs takes on a more concentrated yet increasingly allusive mental meaning defining function as this space becomes 'denser' when photographs are intimately related through human agency or natural accident. In this model, the act of communication, the ability to send and receive messages, is also a positive function of the interval and its allusive potential. Photographs encourage but do not legitimate allusive speculation; allusive communication is not necessarily materialized in the form of a message or even information, it simply exists as a meaningful *potential* that is embalmed in a speculative blanket of anticipation.

Photographic intervals are the products of nebulous, for the most part non-linear relationships that can be created through human agency and that are *expressed* through groupings and loose associations of photographs. These interval-based networks can sometimes take the concrete and systematic—or 'hardwired'—form of 'meta-nodal' associations (archives or albums of related events as defined by a common subject matter or life history, etc.) or they can coalesce, with various degrees of permanence, into arbitrary associations of photographs with more or less intangible intervallic links between their unrelated contents (such as one might find in the boxes of random assortments of photographs that are often sold in flea markets or antique shops). In both cases, the intervals 'embody' various degrees of allusive fictional potential.

Though we are not, at first sight, talking about analogous technologies when we compare the organizations of the Internet and a photographic image culture, it is worth reiterating that what is at stake in an interval based photographic communications theory is the infinite, allusive fictional potential of the interval as defined and measured by the relationship between physical photographs, what ever their final form.

A distributed communication model sheds light on the possible reason for the resilience of a post-1839 'photographic society' whose inhabitants have been constantly threatened with mnemonic annihilation through advanced capitalism's unrelenting fragmentation of social networks and its corrosion of 'traditional' social relationships. A photographically networked culture is able to resist terminal dismemberment through photography's ability to generate different configurations of data (photographs) that are subject to systematic or random organization, where each relationship or set of relationships generates its own configuration of allusive fictional potential(s). Photography has produced a flexible, distributed archive or memory bank upon which to model a panhuman meta-Mind.