Notes

1. For a good overview of photographic art in Canada, see Martha Langford, "A Short History of Photography, 1900–2000," in Brian Foss, Anne Whitelaw and Sandra Polansky eds., The Visual Arts in Canada: The Twentieth Century (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2010), 279–311.


3. For an incisive application of the notion of "field of art" to photography specifically in 1970s Montreal, see Lisa Lamarche, "La photographie par la bande. Notes de recherche à partir des expositions collectives de photographes à Montréal et un peu ailleurs entre 1972 et 1982," in Francine Couture ed., Exposer l'art contemporain au Québec: Discours d'intention et d'accompagnement (Montreal: Centre de diffuson 3D, 2003), 221–265.

4. The first issue of Impressions was printed in Toronto in March 1970. The original editors were John Prendergast and John F. Philips, co-founder of the Baldwin Street Gallery of Photography, Toronto. Subsequent co-editors would include Shin Sugino and Isaac Applebaum. The magazine aimed to showcase photographers whose work is "too personal to find an automatic commercial market.

5. In October 1970, the first issue of Image Nation appeared in Toronto. Edited variously by David Hlynsky, Fletcher Stephick and others, it succeeded the Rochdale College Image Nation, published in 1969–1970 by a printing collective based at the short-lived "alternative" Rochdale College, Toronto. Image Nation was aimed primarily at photographic artists active within the parallel gallery network across Canada. Towards the end of 1970, the first issue of OVO was published in Montreal. Initially a multidisciplinary leftist periodical based at the Cégep du Vieux-Montreal, it soon evolved into a photography magazine with an emphasis on the practice of documentary photography. From 1974 onwards, OVO was edited by Jorge Guerra, joined later by Denyse Gérin-Lajoie.


7. Highly influential for its distinctive use of photographic sequencing, this publication is now commonly considered a masterpiece in the history of the photobook in Canada.

8. A more direct antecedent may also be located in the books produced by the NFB/SPD in the late-1960s, and especially those published within the Image series, which also share attributes with the editor-driven pictorial magazines of the earlier twentieth century. Even the Image books that were devoted to the work of a single photographer (for example, Image #1, on Lutz Dille) are clearly and unabashedly composed by the editor, Lorraine Monk.


10. The first issue of Photo Communiqué appeared in Toronto in March 1979. Edited by Gail Fisher-Taylor, the magazine was apparently created as a direct result of the Eyes of Time conference, held in Ottowa in 1978, where the need was expressed for a publication that could unite the fine arts photography community. The magazine was dedicated to the exchange of information and ideas on photography in Canada. The first issue of BlackFlash appeared in 1984. Initially published by The Photographers Gallery, Saskatchewan, it succeeds the institution’s newsletter The Photographers’ Gallery (1983). It aims to be a serious photography magazine with a strong regional base that also has an impact on photography nationally and internationally. Ciel variable was launched in Montreal in 1989 by the collective Vox Populi. The "magazine documentaire" was committed at the outset to reflecting, through photographs and texts, on contemporary social and cultural conditions. It became independent from Vox Populi in 1987. Over the course of the next few years Ciel variable was transformed into a thematically-oriented photography magazine.

11. Lamarche, 225.


Canadian photographic art was not born in the 1970s. There is evidence that photography was in use here as an expressive form, by professionals and amateurs, throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Through such outlets as exhibitions, salons, books, magazines, and other practitioners in Canada, photography was both active and contributed towards the development in photographic art and photography that was occurring internationally. Nevertheless, the 1970–1990 period was a time of particular growth. It was a time when a great number of photographycentric institutions were created and the discourse on contemporary photography emerged.

The process of institutionalization, and also simply of popularization of the medium, had begun gradually in the early 1960s, chiefly through the activities of the National Film Board of Canada's Still Photography Division (NFB/SPD), which from 1960 to 1980 was headed by Lorraine Monk. The NFB/SPD's regular organization of travelling exhibitions, acquisition of contemporary photography and production of photographycbooks gained momentum. Nevertheless, the 1970–1990 period was a time of particular growth. It was a time when a great number of photographyc-centric institutions were created and the discourse on contemporary photography emerged.

An overview of the photography magazines published between 1970 and 1990 reveals that there were two distinct yet complementary types: the almost–entirely image-based and the primarily text-based. The first category includes Image Nation (Toronto, 1970–1990), Impressions (Toronto, 1970–1983), and many issues of OVO (Montreal, 1970–1987). The lack of text in these magazines (there was often nothing but a page introduction by the editors or, in OVO's case, occasional interjective articles and poems) reflects a "disturb of the word that was current at the time," according to Lorraine Monk. The photographic image, understood as a universal visual language, could and should be allowed to speak for itself.5 The primary aim of these magazines, it must be assumed, was the sharing of creative or non-commercial photographs among a specialized readership.

The first type is interestingly hybrid, for it borrowed many characteristics of the photographic book and in my view of an older style of pictorial magazine that was highly popular between 1930 and 1960. Issues of Image Nation and Impressions, especially, frequently played dual roles of magazine and book – or even catalogue. One example is number 6/7 of Impressions (1973), which reproduced the photo book version of John Max's Open Passport series and acted as a record of an exhibition organized by the NFB/SPD in 1972.6 Another is Kenneth Fletcher and Paul Wong's project Murder Research, which had been originally presented in 1977 as an exhibition and performance at the Vancouver artist-run centre Western Front, and was published as a book work for number 21 of Image Nation (Winter 1980).7 In the absence in this country of an established photobook or art book publishing industry, these magazines sometimes provided the only permanent trace of important artistic projects.

Such autonomous, single-author works stand alongside the far more common strategy employed by image-based magazines: seamlessly combining a large number of individual photographs under a specific theme. The strong editorial voice apparent in these thematic issues connects the magazine to the burgeoning field of contemporary photographic discourse during the 1970s.10 The second type of photography magazine helps to elucidate much of what is left unsaid by the first. The aim of magazines such as Photo Communiqué (Toronto, 1979–1988), BlackFlash (Saskatoon, 1984–1990) and Ciel variable (Montreal, 1980–) was to provide a forum where members of the expanding photographic community could engage in dialogue, and thereby develop a discourse of contemporary photographic practice in Canada. Still – despite evidence, especially discernible in the pages of Photo Communiqué, that the target audience was Canada-at-large – each of these magazines was grounded in a specific community and region.11

Obvious antecedents of this type of periodical can be found in community-centred newsletters, with their gathering in one location of news and events of local interest. BlackFlash, for instance, was already published by The Photographers Gallery, Saskatoon, in the early 1980s. It grew out of the cooperative's previous internal publications, Exchange: The Photographers' Almanac (1975–1979) and The Photographers Gallery (1983). But this class of publication can also be affiliated with the burgeoning field of the art magazine, the granddaddy of which was "L’Autoportrait," and Les vitrines.4 The second type of photography magazine helps to elucidate much of what is left unsaid by the first.

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