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Authorless Pictures: Uses of Photography in Christian Boltanski's Early Work (1969–75)

Olga Smith

Throughout his long career, Christian Boltanski's work has demonstrated a close engagement with the medium of photography, but most notably between 1969 and 1975. In the works from this time, Boltanski relied on photography's connection with everyday life as a quintessentially 'middle-brow art', according to the definition proposed by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in *Un art moyen. Essai sur les usages sociaux de la photographie* (*Photography: A Middle-Brow Art*, 1965).¹ In particular, analysis of Boltanski's use of photography in the series entitled *Images modèles* (*Model Images*, 1973–75) reveals a number of striking interconnections with Bourdieu's pioneering work of sociology of photography at a time when, deeply entrenched in collective amateur practices, photography was defined by its non-participation in the hierarchy of the arts. Yet this was also the decade that prepared the eventual acceptance of photography as a form of art, with signs of institutional integration in evidence by the early 1980s.² In this article, I explore the tension between photography's circulation in the realm of amateur practice and its nascent identity as an artistic medium in Boltanski's early work. My principal aim is to provide a contextualized evaluation of Boltanski's contribution to the history of photography at a historic juncture, and its significance.³

In tune with Bourdieu's belief that the main locus for production and dissemination of amateur photography is located in the family, Boltanski used the format of the photographic family album as a tool of autobiographical reconstruction. However, rather than recording actual events in his life, photography was used by Boltanski as means of cutting across the interstices between fact and fiction, as shown in the example of *10 portraits photographiques de Christian Boltanski 1946–1964* (*10 photographic portraits of Christian Boltanski 1946–1964*, 1972). I propose that these deliberately misleading strategies of self-reconstruction are best understood with reference to major developments in the genre of autobiography in the period under discussion. In 1975 autobiography specialist Philippe Lejeune published *Le Pacte autobiographique* (*The Autobiographical Pact*), hinging his argument on the presumption of the exteriority of the autobiographic referent. This presumption was explicitly overturned in *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* (*Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, 1975), where the eponymous philosopher and critic subjected key aspects of autobiography as a genre to a radical revision. I argue that Boltanski's consciously mendacious strategies of self-reconstruction intersect with these debates in a way that opens onto the wider concerns regarding the status and identity of the author, deconstructed by Barthes in his seminal essay 'La mort de l'auteur' ('The Death of the Author', 1968). By elucidating Boltanski's engagement with the key intellectual debates of his time,

**Detail of Christian Boltanski,
'L'anniversaire', from *Saynètes
comiques*, 1974 (plate 3).**

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the dialogic nature of these encounters becomes apparent and we see how ideas articulated by Barthes, Lejeune and Bourdieu were critically probed and tested in Boltanski's artworks, often by means of playful irony and humour.

Boltanski thus emerges as an active participant in the polemical debates surrounding the artist's identity and function in artistic debates in France at the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s, alongside such artists as Annette Messager, Sarkis and André Cadere. The discursive contestation of institutions found its expression in Boltanski's choice of non-art materials (of which photography was one) and the critique of the nomenclature of authorship. In tracing this line of argument, I extend the analysis of Rebecca DeRoo in *The Museum Establishment and Contemporary Art: The Politics of Artistic Display in France after 1968* (2006). After 1968, DeRoo argued, museums in France underwent significant transformations, which resulted in the emergence of existentialist and formalist interpretations of works by Boltanski and Messager, obscuring their political meaning.⁴ The eminent curator and critic Jean Clair was one of the earliest and most influential proponents of such interpretations, promoting, in his capacity as editor of the art journal *Chroniques de l'art vivant*, a view of Boltanski's art as essentially concerned with human emotions.⁵ As DeRoo demonstrated, the main flaw of these accounts lies in the fact that they consider artistic procedures 'in isolation from their political, institutional, and material contexts'.⁶

By replacing Boltanski's early work in its specific intellectual and historical context I intend to correct the dominant perception of the artist's use of photography to 'present the human, in his/her absence'.⁷ Jean Clair's existentialist interpretation of photography as the quintessential art of recollection contributed to the emergence of the pervasive perception of Boltanski as an artist of memory, death and transcendence, whose artworks act as a sombre commemoration of the events of the Second World War.⁸ In photography theory, Barthes's understanding of photography as a melancholic reminder of the disappeared subject has provided the central interpretative frame for the appreciation of Boltanski's engagement with photography.⁹ But while it is true that the conjoined issues of memory and mortality feature prominently in Boltanski's mature work, they gained prominence only in the mid-1980s. Likewise, for Barthes, death became the *eidōs* (the nature, or essence) of photography only in 1980, with the publication of *La chambre claire* (*Camera Lucida*, 1980). Before this, the early Barthes, the Barthes of *Mythologies* (1957), studied photography as a part of mass culture, while the young Boltanski approached photography as a medium deeply entrenched in the vernacular uses of its day. The relationship of this Boltanski to this Barthes is only beginning to be studied.¹⁰ Disrupting the view of Boltanski's career as homogenous in its fixation on the grave concerns of death and memory, I hope to further contribute to the process of re-evaluation of the formative significance of Boltanski's early years in recent studies.¹¹

From Fictional Autobiography to Autobiography as Fiction

In 1972 Christian Boltanski produced 10 *portraits photographiques de Christian Boltanski 1946–1964* (hereafter 10 *portraits photographiques*). According to the title, it shows ten photographic portraits of the artist between the ages of two and twenty. Each photograph is signed with the date when it was taken and the age of the artist on that day. Born in 1944, Boltanski is shown as a blond toddler in the first image, signed 'Christian Boltanski at the age of 2, 19 May 1946' (plate 1). The last image shows him as a young man, as the caption explains: 'Christian Boltanski at the age of 20, 4 June 1964' (plate 2). The sequence of black-and-white photographic portraits of the kind habitually found in family photo-albums trace physical transformations undergone

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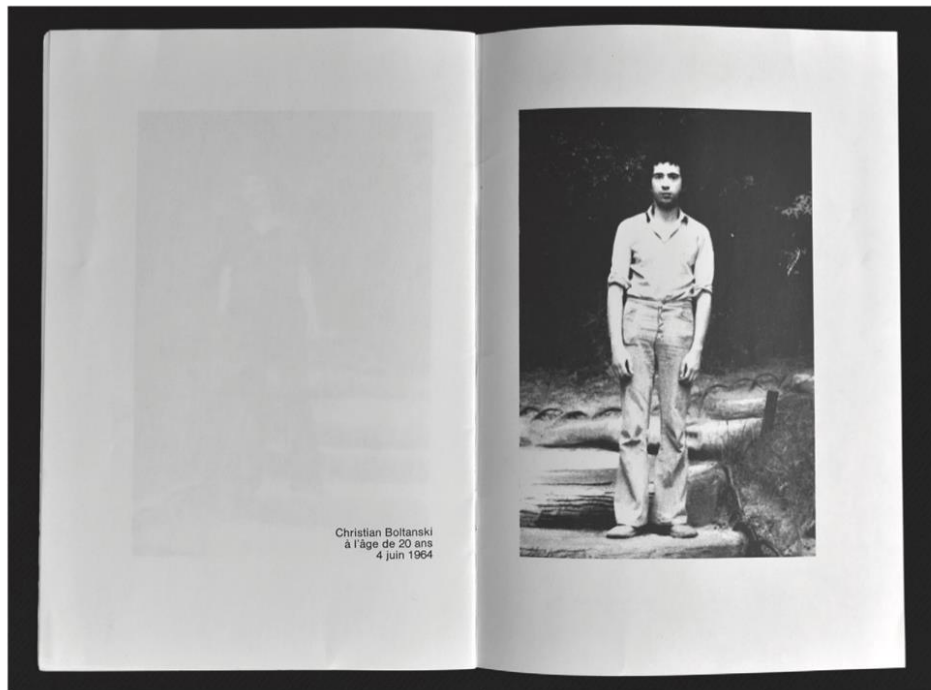


1 Christian Boltanski, 'Christian Boltanski à l'âge de 2 ans, 19 mai 1946', from *10 portraits photographiques de Christian Boltanski, 1946–1964, 1972*. Artist's book (edition of 500), twenty pages with ten black-and-white photographs, 13.5 × 21 cm. Berlin: Kunstbibliothek, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Reproduced by courtesy of the artist. Photo: Barbara Herrenkind.

by the body in the process of maturation from infancy to manhood. On closer inspection, however, these images are disclosed as a hoax: against the persuasion of the captions the viewer comes to realize that the sitters share no actual resemblance. The 'real' Boltanski appears only in the last photograph (plate 2), but even here the caption misleads about his actual age (the artist was twenty-eight at the time, not twenty).¹² The rest of the photographs that purport to span eighteen years have in fact all been taken on a single day: on 17 July 1972 the artist approached boys of different ages in the Parc Montsouris in Paris with a request that they pose for him. The sitters' gestures and attires that seem crucial in helping to reconstruct the different phases of growing up turn out to be nothing but props in Boltanski's elaborately staged photographic fiction.

10 portraits photographiques is typical of Boltanski's early work in its pursuit of autobiographic re-creation. According to a statistical study of Boltanski's works made between 1968 and 1975, carried out by Camille Paulhan, the name Christian Boltanski or the pronouns 'I' and 'my' appear in the titles of thirty-three works.¹³ Autobiographic reconstruction was the subject of what Boltanski considers his first serious work, *Recherche et présentation de tout ce qui reste de mon enfance 1944–1950* (Research and presentation of all that remains of my childhood, 1944–1950, 1969; hereafter *Recherche et présentation*). In this artist's book, Boltanski gathers together photographic documentation of objects that supposedly belonged to him as a child. However, as with *10 portraits photographiques*, the spirit of earnest documentation is undermined,

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2 Christian Boltanski, 'Christian Boltanski à l'âge de 20 ans, 4 juin 1964', from *10 portraits photographiques de Christian Boltanski, 1946–1964, 1972*. Artist's book (edition of 500), twenty pages with ten black-and-white photographs, 13.5 × 21 cm. Berlin: Kunstbibliothek, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Reproduced by courtesy of the artist. Photo: Barbara Herrenkind.

given that the artist combined genuine remains of his childhood with fakes – objects belonging to his nephew. Ruse, falsification and impersonation would habitually accompany the process of autobiographic recollection in the early period of the artist's career. Such wilfully mendacious techniques would be deemed incompatible with the task of an autobiographer in the view of Philippe Lejeune. In *Le Pacte autobiographique* Lejeune postulated that every autobiographer makes an implied promise to relate his/her life-story truthfully, thereby entering into a binding contract with the reader: the 'autobiographical pact'. Ideas presented in Lejeune's theoretical appraisal of autobiography as a genre were first developed in his *L'Autobiographie en France* (*Autobiography in France*, 1971), published at the time of Boltanski's earliest experiments with autobiographic narratives, including *10 portraits photographiques*. For Lejeune, commitment to veracity represents the pre-eminent feature of the autobiographical narrative:

In contrast with all forms of fiction, biography and autobiography are referential texts: just like scientific or historical material, they claim to provide information pertaining to 'reality' beyond the text, and should, as such, be capable of withstanding the test of verification.¹⁴

What distinguishes an autobiographic narrative from a fictional account is its capacity to refer to real phenomena beyond the text – its referential quality. The visual equivalent of an autobiography would have to be a photographic self-portrait, since

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only photography is capable of furnishing the referential stability desired by Lejeune. Photography's indexical properties had dominated the search for the ontology of this medium ever since André Bazin defined a photograph as an extension of its referent.¹⁵ Boltanski's 10 portraits photographiques technically refer to real sitters whose likeness they record, but the presumption of referentiality was used as an unwitting aid in the staging of his autobiographic fiction, producing images that are incapable of withstanding Lejeune's 'test of verification'. As Boltanski explained, photography provided him with an opportunity to create a fictional autobiography, or, as he put it, to furnish 'proofs of the existence of the mythical character that I have created, Christian Boltanski'.¹⁶

The gravity of the project of autobiographic reconstruction and the demand for truth it imposes was further undermined through the playful humour that animates many of Boltanski's early works. In *Les Saynètes comiques* (The Comic Sketches, 1974) the artist fully exploited the comic potential of impersonation and role-play. This series gathers scenes from the life of 'le petit Christian', describing, from the standpoint of the child, pivotal life events such the marriage of his parents, his own birth and the death of the grandfather, but also everyday occurrences like going to the beach, a doctor's visit and birthday celebrations (plate 3). Grimacing and striking exaggerated poses against crudely painted sets, the artist performed all the roles in the sketches with the help of some basic costume alternations. In order to transform himself into 'little Christian', for example, Boltanski rolled up his trousers and pulled his jacket over his head, which not only made him look physically smaller, but also comically grotesque. Critics rightfully drew comparisons with the tradition of Eastern European theatre, familiar to the artist from his exposure to Jewish culture through his parents.¹⁷ It seems equally important to point out that the main subject of these sketches is childhood memories, and to highlight affinities with children's drama, specifically the French national tradition of Guignol puppet theatre with its slapstick comedy. The state of childhood is furthermore evoked through the choice of formats and materials: the photographic sequences connect together to form a narrative in the manner reminiscent of a comic book strip, while the crudely painted stage sets look like they could have been executed by a child. For a series of posters, made from enlarged copies of the photographic scenes, the artist used pastel crayons to colour the surface of the print with blocks of vivid colour in the manner of a child's colouring book. As play-acting turns into child's play, it becomes apparent that one of the main achievements of *Les Saynètes comiques* lies in its ability to convey the experience of being a child.

And yet the promise of autobiographic disclosure is once again thwarted. Despite the fact that the artist and 'le petit Christian' share the same name, *Les Saynètes comiques* cannot be relied upon to provide authentic insight.¹⁸ Scenes depicted here have little to do with the artist's upbringing in a middle-class family of intellectuals: Boltanski's mother was a left-wing activist and novelist, publishing under the pseudonym Annie Laurant (real name Myriam Boltanski, née Marie-Élise Ilari-Guérin), while the artist's father, Étienne Boltanski, was a respected psychologist. But even without this knowledge it is clear that the characters depicted in these sketches – the dominating and awe-inspiring *pater familias*, the kindly and submissive mother, their mischievous son – are but grotesque caricatures of orthodox family roles. Boltanski himself described these roles as 'clichés', comparing them to the received family types in children's literature: 'it's like in Babar – the father is mean, the grand-father is nice, children go to school ...'¹⁹ The scenes of family life depicted in *Les Saynètes comiques* are equally generic, telling the familiar story of a boy who loves celebrating his birthdays, regularly gets into trouble and will do anything to avoid washing.

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3 Christian Boltanski, 'L'anniversaire', from *Saynètes comiques*, 1974. Five gelatin silver prints mounted on board, handwritten text, 37.9 x 112.6 cm. Paris: Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou. Reproduced by courtesy of the artist. Photo: Philippe Migeat/bpk/CNAC-MNAN/Christian Boltanski.

'He told so many stories about his childhood, so many dubious anecdotes about his family that, as he often said it, he no longer knew what was true and what wasn't.'²⁰ Writing about himself in the third person, Boltanski declared himself susceptible to his own games of mystification in *Ce dont ils se souviennent* (*What They Remember*, 1990). In this curious autobiography, narrated from the standpoint of the third person and using past tense exclusively, the artist listed 100 'facts' about his private life and artistic career, to give an account styled to imitate the factual objectivity of an obituary – or that of a photographic record. Written in 1990, this text testifies to his ongoing concern with autobiography; however, stylistically and conceptually it corresponds to Boltanski's photographic works from the 1970s. In fact, it unambiguously references a key literary work from this decade, Georges Perec's *Je me souviens* (*I Remember*, 1978).²¹ Boltanski borrowed Perec's strategy of listing memories of historical events alongside facts of supreme irrelevance and hearsay, emphasizing a non-hierarchical approach through the arbitrary numbering of the recollections. The main distinction between the two texts lies in the use of the speaking voice: unlike Perec, who writes in the first person voice ('I remember'), Boltanski assumed the third person pronoun ('what they remember'). The outcome is a polyphonic narrative that combines multiple perspectives in a manner that ultimately refuses to combine into a unified portrait of a person called Christian Boltanski.

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Boltanski's autobiography invites a comparison with Barthes's intimate, yet tantalizingly elusive self-narrative *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*. Shifting between the pronouns he, I, and you, to mark the ever-changing position of the subject, Barthes blurs the boundaries of graspable subjectivity to produce one of the most influential works of contemporary autobiography. Published in the same year as Lejeune's *Le Pacte autobiographique*, this text takes a very different position regarding the presumption of an exterior referent. While for Lejeune, 'information pertaining to "reality" beyond the text' is taken as given, for Barthes, to quote what has become the best-known line from his book, 'in the field of the subject, there is no referent'.²² Subsequently, critics have demonstrated that, far from celebrating a poststructuralist, de-centred notion of the subject, Barthes is speaking of the monumental struggle against language in pursuit of self-expression.²³ Nevertheless, Barthes's text posed a major challenge to conventions defining autobiography as a genre, prompting Lejeune to re-address his position in *Le pacte autobiographique (bis)* (1981). However, since Lejeune's concern for truth is an ethical one, he cannot but reaffirm, *contra* Barthes, his unwavering faith in 'the transparency of language, and ... the existence of a complete subject who expresses himself through it'.²⁴

For Barthes, the loss of referential stability is especially apparent in the realm of self-representation. This also proves to be the case with Boltanski's autobiographical reconstructions, where the viewer comes up against the impossibility of locating

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the 'real' Boltanski. As has been demonstrated, the photographs that pose as Boltanski's family album snaps in 10 *portraits photographiques* prove to be outright fakes, while childhood events recreated in *Les Saynètes comiques* parade a host of generic typologies. Indeed, Boltanski proclaimed that his is 'a completely false autobiography and presented as false with all sorts of false proof'.²⁵ In making this statement Boltanski seemingly adopted the rhetoric of Lejeune's 'autobiographical pact', only to completely reverse its main premise by replacing the demand for telling the truth with a mock-earnest commitment to mislead. The 'real' Boltanski proves untraceable beyond the multitude of fictional selves he has created, and remains ungraspable beyond the conventions of autobiography as a genre. The problem of reconciling the overlapping positions of the subject and the object of the autobiographical narrative, and the presumption of homology between the two, has been systematically explored by Boltanski in his early art. As I demonstrate in what follows, this problematic opens onto the wider concerns with the institution of authorship, embodied in the authoritative notion of 'Author-God', or 'Author' as defined by Barthes and Foucault. In the late 1960s and early 1970s in France these concerns proved not only crucial to cultural and intellectual enquiry but also motivated some of the key developments on the Parisian art scene.

Death of the Author, Reconstructed as Accident

With the publication of 'The Death of the Author' in 1968, the author of *Roland Barthes* by Roland Barthes gave a clear diagnosis of the crisis of the notions of authorship and subjectivity.²⁶ In this essay Barthes argued for the deconstruction of the privileged status of the Author in the analysis of texts, where, when freed from the concern for authorial intention, multiple interpretations could freely coexist. Written as an injunction against the tendency in literary criticism to read fictional writings through the prism of autobiography, Barthes lamented that 'the author still reigns in histories of literature, biographies of writers, interviews, magazines, as in the very consciousness of men of letters are anxious to unite their person and their work through diaries and memoirs' (143, original emphasis).

Barthes singled out the interview and biography as the main vehicles of promoting continuity between the author and their work. Using a written interview for *Tel Quel*, Barthes self-reflexively put on trial the very practice of the interview, highlighting its false spontaneity: 'during the interview the author acts as if he is thinking'.²⁷ In the context of the art world with its rituals of self-presentation (and self-promotion), the interview is related directly to the format of the artist's statement, traditionally perceived as a spontaneous and authentic expression of the artist's intentions.²⁸ Boltanski playfully subverted these expectations, by enlisting the artist's statement and interview, much as he has done with autobiography, as strategic tools of dissimulation. From his earliest interviews, he offered ambiguous and provocative statements in response to relatively straightforward questions.²⁹ As fame brought more and more requests for an audience, he developed a mode of interview practice that resembled acts of performance, during which the artist repeated, almost verbatim, his pronouncements from previous interviews, often re-telling the same unverifiable anecdotes about his private life.

By merging autobiographical narrative with artistic practice, Boltanski thus made it difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between Christian Boltanski the artist and Christian Boltanski the fictional character. But 'le petit Christian' and 'Christian Boltanski' were just some of the characters the artist inhabited in the early part of his career. In conjunction with his various projects, Boltanski also appeared as The Saint,

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The Ethnologist, The False Preacher, The Clown, The Painter and The Trickster.³⁰ Crucial to the fabrication of these identities, as Camille Paulhan's research into the early critical reception of Boltanski's art has revealed, were diverse interpretations offered by the interviewers, critics and scholars, and Boltanski's acceptance of any and every critical label they attached to his work. For Paulhan, the symbiotic nature of the relationship between the artist and the critics played the strategic role of eliminating any negative publicity.³¹

While Boltanski's strategies of self-mythologization were particularly elaborate, he was by no means alone in experimenting with various identities. In the 1970s Annette Messager, with whom Boltanski was in a relationship, deconstructed Western clichés of femininity through the staged personae of the practical woman ('femme pratique'), the collector ('collectionneuse'), the fraudstress ('truqueuse') and the artist ('artiste').³² These works are now celebrated as key examples of the nascent feminist movement in art, but in the context of this discussion it is worth highlighting structural similarities between Messager's and Boltanski's exploration of staged identities. These convergences became especially apparent when both artists' works were included in an exhibition exploring the fragmentation of modern identity in contemporary art, entitled *Identité/Identifications (Identity/Identifications, 1976)*. Jean Le Gac, with whom Boltanski collaborated extensively between 1968 and 1972 on interventions that occurred at the border of imagined and real situations, explored in his drawings the role of an anonymous painter in difficulty of self-expression.³³ In the same period André Cadere notoriously disturbed conventions of authorship drawn by the market and art institutions with his 'round bars of wood' ('barres de bois rond'), by virtue of the ease with which these objects could be inserted into any environment, including other artists' exhibitions. Boltanski, Cadere, Le Gac and Messager, together with Bernard Borgeaud, Jochen Gerz, Paul-Armand Gette and Sarkis formed a group of young artists who emerged more or less at the same time on the Parisian art scene. Several attempts have been made to retrospectively lend cohesion to this group. The organizers of the exhibition *Une Scène parisienne 1968–1972 (1991)* emphasized the importance of Paris as the geographical centre of artistic activity.³⁴ They inherited this interpretative scheme from the curators of *Tendances de l'art en France 1968–1978/9 (1979)*, who presented this group as the leading Parisian artists at the end of the 1970s.³⁵ But while Paris was clearly important as the locus of social and artistic networks, geography and occasional collaborations were not the only aspects binding this circle of generational peers together. Another important factor was a shared interest in the ideological function of authorial identity and the status of the artist.

The publication of Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects (1550)* announced the birth of the genre of artist's autobiography, giving rise to the modern idea of the artist as the locus of originality and creative expression, elevated to the standing of a visionary and a secular saint.³⁶ The Saint, as it will be remembered, was one of the identities Boltanski claimed for himself, but only to expose this notion to ridicule. "The only time I met him, he went into a whole spiel about saintliness, it was after an opening, I think he drank too much", joked Boltanski about himself in *What they remember*.³⁷ From the mid-1980s interpretations analysing Boltanski's relationship to religious symbols through the double prism of both Catholic and Jewish religions of his parents began to multiply, ultimately ossifying into a dominant critical paradigm. However, it is more relevant to consider Boltanski's claims to sainthood with reference to the rise of the artist as a celebrity, promoted by the new forms of media publicity. It was in the context of

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art world sainthood with its rituals of exhibition openings and public interviews that Didier Semin considered Boltanski's self-avowed holiness, against two kinds of saints: 'preaching saints who express themselves in parables and walk the world in monastic garb (Joseph Beuys), and luminous saints, haloed in glory, who barely speak but whose pictures change hands for gold (Andy Warhol)'.³⁸ Semin went on to distinguish Boltanski from these models, exemplified by Beuys and Warhol: while relying on autobiographic material as the source of his art, Boltanski's 'melancholic irony' turns hagiography into mockery, since the stories he tells are both unremarkable and untrue.

Lofty conceptions of the artist as a secular saint suffered the deflating effect of Boltanski's irony, but the critique of authorship underwent similar treatment, as Boltanski the Trickster turned 'the death of the Author' into a practical joke. In *Reconstitution d'un accident qui ne m'est pas encore arrivé et où j'ai trouvé la mort* (*Reconstitution of an accident which hasn't happened yet and in which I met my death*, 1969), as the title suggests, the artist reconstructed his own future death in a traffic accident. The reconstruction of the artist's death, like the reconstruction of his life in such works as *Recherche et présentation*, is 'presented as false with all sorts of false proof' and includes an assemblage of photographic and material documents: a photocopy of the artist's medical record ('carte sanitaire'); a photocopied photograph, captioned 'the last photograph of Christian Boltanski'; a hand-drawn diagram of the street where the accident would have taken place; and two 'forensic' items of evidence – a photograph of the mark on the road left by the tyres, and a photograph of the chalk outline of the body. By joining these pieces together in the manner of a detective investigation, the viewer reconstructs the sequence of events that led to the accident: while crossing the avenue Jean Jaurès, Boltanski was hit by a car turning from Boulevard Carnot, dying on the spot. This accident, however, is not only improbably scheduled to take place in some unknown future, but its location is simply non-existent, since the two named Parisian streets do not intersect. Despite this, and the giveaway title, when the artist distributed this work as mail art, it solicited genuine concern among some of its addressees, who fell victim to Boltanski's successful – if somewhat inconsiderate – game of mystification.

The same effect was achieved when the following year Boltanski sent out another mail art piece, a letter that subsequently became known *Il faut que vous m'aidiez... (You have to help me...)* (1970). In this letter the artist pleaded for help in a manner that hinted at a contemplation of suicide, describing himself as having fallen victim to unnamed but apparently grave circumstances. This work, like *Reconstitution d'un accident qui ne m'est pas encore arrivé et où j'ai trouvé la mort*, is controversial in that it deals with the grave matter of mortality in a light-hearted and ludic manner. While evidently provocative in the way death as a subject is broached, these works display a lightness of touch and playful humour that disappears in Boltanski's later art as death stops being a subject for jokes. The exploration of the funny side of the macabre culminated with *Les morts pour rire de Christian Boltanski* (*Deaths for fun of Christian Boltanski*, 1974), the very title of which suggests ambivalence towards death as the subject unsuitable for jokes. In this series Boltanski enacted for the camera the many ways to end one's life, as scenarios in double sequences of 'before' and 'after'. Thus, the first image would show the artist about to commit suicide, as, for example, with a noose tied around his neck, while the second photograph showed him displaying the loose end of the rope, disclosing with a grin that the suicide attempt was nothing but a stunt. In the same manner, in *Reconstitution d'un accident qui ne m'est pas encore arrivé*, 'the death of the Author' was played out literally, as the grotesque death of the artist in a banal traffic accident. By mediating these

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actions through irony Boltanski leaves the viewer uncertain as to how to react to these provocations, whether to laugh or offer help, as indeed did some of the recipients of *Il faut que vous m'aidez...*³⁹ This experience was aptly described by Semin as a matter of '[straddling] the twin banks of truth and falsehood, of the moralist and the trickster, in the stimulating anxiety of indecision'.⁴⁰

Boltanski's derisory jokes and silly impersonations thus demand to be taken seriously, as effective means of challenging the modern reification of the artist. Interrogation of the traditional function of the artist formed a part of the wider critique of the institutional frameworks in France in the 1960s and the 1970s, in the spirit of active mistrust of the artwork as an object of beauty confident of its place in the museum. This mood of mistrust was described by Catherine Millet as all-pervasive, encapsulated in the title of Ben Vautier's work from 1965, *L'Art est inutile* (Art is useless).⁴¹ A member of Fluxus, Vautier used his signature – the single word 'Ben', handwritten in looping letters – as a challenge to the traditional role of the artist. In the same period each member of the short-lived consortium of artists BMPT (1966–67) adopted a single basic element to produce painterly abstractions interchangeable in terms of authorship and aesthetic, even if only as a provocation.⁴² The members of BMPT pursued anonymity alongside the politically radical *Nouvelle Figuration* artists associated with the *Salon de la Jeune Peinture*. According to Sami Siegelbaum, 'being anonymous anticipated the increasing emphasis the *Salon de la Jeune Peinture* would place on anonymity as a political value, a means of escaping the ideology of individual creation'.⁴³ Siegelbaum convincingly demonstrated that the basis for this critique lies in the Marxist philosophy of Louis Althusser, but it is equally important to consider the impact of Michel Foucault's analysis of the subject. One aspect of this thesis was articulated in 'Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?' ('What is an Author?', 1969), where Foucault considered, like Barthes, the complexity of the overlapping positions of the writer, the author and the narrator. However, for Foucault, their combined 'author-function [is] tied to the legal and institutional systems that circumscribe, determine, and articulate the realm of discourses'.⁴⁴

Until relatively recently, Boltanski's art was not considered in relation to these debates. Rebecca DeRoo's study of the changes in museum policy in France following the events of 1968 was the first to present Boltanski and Messager (alongside such artists as Le Gac and Gina Pane) as engaged in the critique of institutions, albeit in a more indirect manner compared to artists associated with the *Salon de la Jeune Peinture*, or those who took part in political protests of 1968 by producing agitation posters in the *ateliers populaires* (people's studios). DeRoo's criticism of the depoliticization of Boltanski's art was more recently adjoined to a demand articulated by Perin Emel Yavuz to regard Boltanski's reconfiguration of subjectivity and authorship as expressly political in its orientation towards the social function.⁴⁵ Another aspect of Boltanski's art worth considering with regard to institutional critique is his predilection for everyday materials and deliberately unskilled methods of production.

Having abandoned painting at the very start of his career, Boltanski embarked on exuberant exploration of a diverse range of media, often relying on readily available materials, which he manipulated in a distinctly amateur-like manner. A survey of his early works, gathered in *Vitrines de références* (*Reference vitrines*, 1970–73), reveals use of such materials as sugar cubes, roughly cut into diminutive sculptures; mud, rolled manually into small balls; and sticks and blades, crudely put together to make small knives (*Pièges* and *Couteaux*). Among Boltanski's peers, Sarkis also incorporated everyday materials such as tarmac and metal into his installations *Mekkano + Goudron*

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(1970–71), which were exhibited alongside Boltanski's *Couteaux* in an exhibition at ARC/Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris in 1970. This interest in the non-art materials can be traced to the artistic practices of the 1960s, when Arman, Jean Tinguely and Daniel Spoerri, to name but a few, appropriated utilitarian objects as 'readymades' in response to the rise of consumerism in the 1960s. Sarah Wilson interprets these tendencies in French art as indicative of a broader 'fascination with "everyday life"', reflected in the 'nouveau roman' novels of Alain Robbe-Grillet and literary experiments of Georges Perec, as well as the 'nouvelle vague' cinema of Francois Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard.⁴⁶

It is important to consider Boltanski's art in relation to these historical contexts in order to challenge the pervasive tendency to link his use of ephemeral materials to the issues of mortality and transcendence, where everyday objects are perceived as residual traces of human existence. While it is true that throughout his career the artist consistently relied upon readily available materials, which thereby became an integral part of his signature style, their meaning cannot be reduced to the enduring appeal of eternal themes of life and death. For one, the emergence of these apparently timeless themes was in fact a product of historical circumstances, precipitated by a change of paradigms in the field of French historiography.⁴⁷ Above all, by positioning Boltanski's use of everyday materials within the context of historical events that gave rise to such practices, I wish to draw attention to Boltanski's impatience with traditional modes of producing and exhibiting art, within a wider critique of the traditional values of beauty and craftsmanship.

Such procedures also align Boltanski's works with the realm of the vernacular and commonplace, an orientation that had a special significance in relation to his use of photography. Readily available and inexpensive to use, photography became the medium of choice for the young artist, who needed to produce work quickly and cost-effectively. At the start of his career, Boltanski relied on photography as a means of fabricating artist's books, made in a distinctly amateurish manner: photographs, accompanied by typed captions, were photocopied to be printed on cheap offset paper and then manually collated. The poor quality of the print caused the degradation of the tonal value of the images, as can be seen in the example of Boltanski's inaugural oeuvre, *Recherche et présentation*. This book was made on the premises of Galerie Givaudan, whose owner, Claude Givaudan, offered the young artist the basic conditions for making his first artist's books, by granting him unlimited access to his photocopier.⁴⁸ Publication of artist's books, as well as limited edition works produced in series ('multiples') formed the integral part of Givaudan's ambition to make access to art more democratic. The association with Galerie Givaudan thus gave Boltanski more than just access to the means of making work: it exposed him to the critique of the traditional ideas of artistic value and uniqueness, encouraging him to reflect on the institutional conditions of art's circulation.

The small edition number of the earliest books like *Recherche et présentation* was determined not only by the practical limitations imposed by production costs (which had to be met by the artist himself), but also by the number of addressees the artist could reach by sending the book by post, as mail art. The pocket-sized format of the artist's book was perfectly suited to postal distribution, but it was not the only object Boltanski sent as mail art: between 1969 and 1971 the artist mailed photographs, objects, records of performances, as well as more traditional types of postal communications such as letters (*Il faut que vous m'aidez...* being one example). In 1970 a selection of Boltanski's mail art pieces was shown in Ben Doute de Tout gallery in Nice, upon the invitation of its owner Ben Vautier. Throughout the 1960s,

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Vautier and Robert Filliou, members of the French branch of Fluxus, used mail art to elude and subvert traditional circuits for making and exhibiting art.⁴⁹ They shared the belief that audiences should be involved directly, taking their art into the public space of the street with Happenings, while simultaneously infiltrating the private space of the home through mail art. For the artists of the subsequent generation, including Boltanski, the implications of using mail art are more ambiguous. For one, the potential for reaching new audiences through mail art was unrealized since Boltanski limited his mailings to people already connected to the art world: the copies of *Recherche et présentation* were distributed only to the mailing list subscribers at the Galerie Givaudan. The artist retrospectively explained this decision by concerns for the breach of privacy;⁵⁰ however, evidently the use of Givaudan's mailing list gave the then little-known artist a unique opportunity for self-promotion by granting direct access to collectors, gallery-owners and critics.

The critical project of introducing a change into the way art is made and distributed thus remained incomplete, not least because systems that promoted traditional values, including the art market and museums, remained largely unchanged. As DeRoos explained, 'The museum establishment' preserved a vested interest in maintaining the institution of the Author to guarantee the prestige of art as the highest form of personal expression. This reflects failure of the attempts to abolish the nomenclature of authorship on many levels, including philosophical.⁵¹ In this situation, 'by using private materials to create multiple and even fictional identities [Boltanski] was able to work out a new role for the artist that was based on the "death of the author" and was influenced by and responded to the rapidly changing political, intellectual, and economic circumstances' (73). This adroit negotiation of a complex predicament can also be seen as a relative failure of the ambition to reconfigure the status of the author, since 'out of the death of the author [came] out a highly successful form of authorship' (73), and a thriving career of enviable longevity.

As France's political and cultural situation changed in response to the events of 1968, Boltanski developed new ways of testing the limits of institutional frameworks of the museum. In its proximity to everyday life and non-participation in the hierarchy of the legitimate arts, photography held a particular appeal for Boltanski in this endeavour. Arguably the most significant body of work this undertaking yielded was the photographic series *Images modèles*.

Authorless Pictures

Images modèles comprises some 200 photographs, made by Boltanski in the course of two years of intermittent work, from 1973 to 1975.⁵² Taken mostly outdoors, the photographs show agreeable, innocuous subjects such as the scenes of leisure, children and views of nature (plates 4–11). The pursuit of subjects that express the spirit of *joie de vivre* defined the project of *Images modèles*, to which Boltanski declared his unreserved devotion:

I am making photographs; I have perfected my technique, and I am trying to conform to the rules of this so difficult art. I am now tackling colour photography that lends itself so well to subjects I am so fond of – those that express the beauty of simple things and the joy of living.⁵³

Featuring on the invitation to the exhibition at the Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, where the series was exhibited under the title *Photographies couleurs – Images modèles* (19–24 May 1976), this text ostensibly served to outline the

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4 Christian Boltanski, untitled work from *Images modèles*, 1973–75. Chromogenic print on chipboard, 39.5 × 29.5 cm. Paris: Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou. Reproduced by courtesy of the artist. Photo: Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI/ Georges Meguerditchian.

5 Christian Boltanski, untitled work from *Images modèles*, 1973–75. Chromogenic print on chipboard, 39.5 × 29.5 cm. Paris: Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou. Reproduced by courtesy of the artist. Photo: Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI/ Georges Meguerditchian.

6 Christian Boltanski, untitled work from *Images modèles*, 1973–75. Chromogenic print on chipboard, 39.5 × 29.5 cm. Paris: Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou. Reproduced by courtesy of the artist. Photo: Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI/ Georges Meguerditchian.

7 Christian Boltanski, untitled work from *Images modèles*, 1973–75. Chromogenic print on chipboard, 39.5 × 29.5 cm. Paris: Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou. Reproduced by courtesy of the artist. Photo: Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI/ Georges Meguerditchian.

rationale for the project. The over-enthusiastic tone of this statement raises suspicion, but factually it is correct: *Images modèles* did indeed mark the start of a new period in Boltanski's work, dedicated almost entirely to 'making photographs', mostly in colour. This shift occurred around 1975 and was marked by a growing interest in photography as medium, its possibilities, but also its limitations.⁵⁴

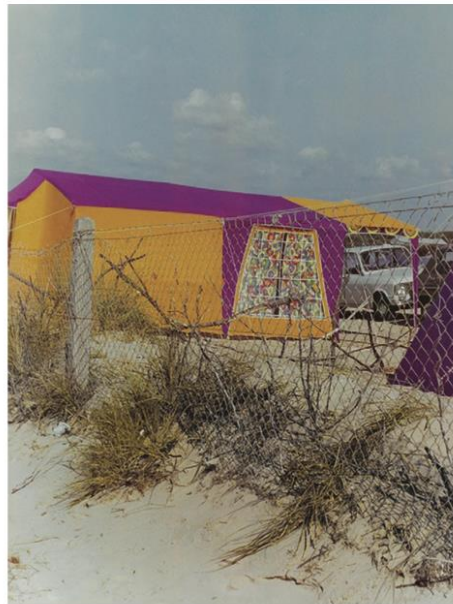
One important change was that with *Images modèles* Boltanski embraced 'straight' photography, in the sense of breaking with his previous practice of staging or manipulating photographs, using found images or delegating the task of taking photographs to his friends or professional photographers. Thus, it was Annette Messenger who made photographs for 10 portraits photographiques, as well as other artist's books Boltanski produced. In contrast, in *Images modèles*, having proclaimed 'I am making photographs', Boltanski did indeed take every image in the series himself. For this reason, photographs comprising the series can be described as authentic in the sense of being a product of the artist's hand. But perhaps most importantly, here for the first time the artist documented his real life: *Images modèles* feature members of Boltanski's immediate family, including his sister and Annette Messenger (plate 10), as well as pictures from his trips to Venice and Berlin (plate 6) and holidays in Berck, a French seaside resort and Messenger's hometown (plate 11).⁵⁵ It would seem that with *Images modèles* Boltanski came the closest to assembling a genuine photographic record of his life's events.

It is then all the more striking to perceive that images that arose from real experiences should look so generic. There is little that distinguishes Boltanski's photographs from anyone and everyone's private snapshots from the point of view of formal properties and subject matter. There are pictures of children at play and children with pets, picturesque views and beach scenes, all of which conform to the taxonomies of subjects common to vernacular photography: holiday photos, family snaps, beautiful views (plates 4–11). Concurrently, it is impossible to engage with the photographs comprising *Images modèles* individually, which explains why they are never exhibited as stand-alone images but always as a collection of photographs, hung closely together.⁵⁶ For Catherine Grenier, *Images modèles* fulfils the ambition to 'compose a portrait of our own era' by combining experiences broadly shared by all.⁵⁷ Such interpretation is limiting since it operates in a historical and contextual vacuum, glossing over the eccentricity of expending energy and time on making utterly unremarkable pictures. Considered against the backdrop of the widespread interrogation of the ideology of individual creativity in art and discourses in the period under discussion, the unremarkable, generic quality of images comprising *Images modèles* must be considered an outcome of the withdrawal of authorial control over the production of the work, yielding truly authorless pictures.

'The artist Christian Boltanski, the author-photographer, disappears almost completely from these stereotypical images of standard art. No individual point of view, no subjective gaze. The artist as a machine.' This is how the German curator and photography scholar Klaus Honnef described the act of erasure of authorial presence in *Images modèles*.⁵⁸ A complete withdrawal of subjective choice equally defined an approach adopted by Annette Messenger in a project entitled *Le Bonheur illustré* (*Happiness Illustrated*, 1975–76). Drawings of sunsets, lovers holding hands, ballet dancers and travel brochure-style views of famous sights, executed in pencil in a cloyingly cheerful colour palette, were mechanically copied from the photographic illustrations in the press, selected on the basis of their popular appeal.⁵⁹ Messenger and Boltanski worked on their projects separately but in close proximity, and even combined the outcomes in a rare act of collaboration in an installation entitled *Voyage de nocces à Venise* (*Honeymoon in Venice*) in

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8 Christian Boltanski, 'Enfants au chien', from *Images modèles*, 1973–75. Chromogenic print on chipboard, 39.5 x 29.5 cm. Paris: Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou. Reproduced by courtesy of the artist. Photo: Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI/ Georges Meguerditchian.

9 Christian Boltanski, untitled work from *Images modèles*, 1973–75. Chromogenic print on chipboard, 39.5 x 29.5 cm. Paris: Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou. Reproduced by courtesy of the artist. Photo: Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI/ Georges Meguerditchian.

10 Christian Boltanski, 'Près de la rivière', from *Images modèles*, 1973–75. Chromogenic print on chipboard, 39.5 x 29.5 cm. Paris: Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou. Reproduced by courtesy of the artist. Photo: Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI/ Georges Meguerditchian.

11 Christian Boltanski, 'La tente malve', from *Images modèles*, 1973–75. Chromogenic print on chipboard, 39.5 x 29.5 cm. Paris: Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou. Reproduced by courtesy of the artist. Photo: Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI/ Georges Meguerditchian.

1975,⁶⁰ and then again in 1976, upon the invitation from Honnèf to exhibit together.⁶¹ Considered alongside *Le Bonheur illustré* and within the context of its exhibition history, Boltanski's project in *Images modèles* emerges as a systematic investigation of pre-existing codes on which the apparently spontaneous process of taking photographs depends.

That the practice of photography is guided by shared cultural codes was the conclusion of Pierre Bourdieu's *Un art moyen. Essai sur les usages sociaux de la photographie* (hereafter *Un art moyen*). In this pioneering study of photography's social uses in everyday life Bourdieu and his team were faced with a paradox: despite the individual circumstances in which amateur photographs are produced, they all tend to share a collective resemblance. To explain this paradox Bourdieu and his colleagues studied the influence of implicit, but powerful pressures exerted on the photographer and his subjects: enmeshed in a culturally derived practice and social codes broadly shared, every aspect of amateur photography follows a predetermined script.

There is nothing more regulated and conventional than photographic practice and amateur photography, in the occasions which give rise to photography, such as the objects, people and people photographed or the very composition of the pictures, everything seems to obey implicit canons which are very generally imposed.⁶²

These rules, albeit unacknowledged and undefined, powerfully orientate amateur photography towards the production of certain types of subjects, mainly children, and family members.⁶³ Further to this, 'the intensification of the photographic practices [is] very closely linked to holidays and tourism'.⁶⁴

Holiday snaps, photographs of children and family members represent the main subjects of *Images modèles*. Boltanski defined his choice of subjects in terms that echo Bourdieu's conclusion: in 'amateur photography the photographer is not interested in capturing reality: he seeks to copy a culturally imposed, pre-existent image'.⁶⁵ In this conjunction, it is interesting to consider Boltanski's 10 *Images relatant les vacances d'un petit garçon* (10 *Images of the holidays of a small boy*) and its counterpart, 13 *Images relatant les vacances d'une jeune fille* (13 *Images of the holidays of a young girl*), both from 1972 and made with photographs the artist bought at a flea market of two unknown children. The comparison between these photographs and images contained in *Images modèles* demonstrates the striking similarities between the holiday snaps taken by an unnamed amateur and Boltanski's works.

Even in his early stagings of autobiographic fiction Boltanski relied on the viewer's ability to recognize the stereotypes of amateur photography. Given the absence of resemblance between the sitters unwittingly impersonating Boltanski in 10 *portraits photographiques*, the (mis-)identification of the sitters could not be based on visual evidence offered by the photographs. Instead, it was founded on the recognition of the photographic conventions, including that of the photographic pose, adopted by the sitters: standing straight, arms by the side, gaze directed at the camera's lens. This classic 'posing' pose, according to Max Kozloff, was a product of photography, a medium that tautologically '[gave] rise to a set of gestures that never existed before the camera'.⁶⁶ 'Implicit canons' which amateur photography obeys so faithfully, according to Bourdieu, thus turn out to be a product of photographic practices themselves.

Boltanski stated that he never read *Un art moyen*.⁶⁷ However, he was well informed of its main arguments through his brother, eminent sociologist Luc Boltanski, who was a member of Bourdieu's research team on photography at the Centre de sociologie européenne and a contributor to the resulting book.⁶⁸ The youngest of the three brothers, Christian maintained a close and warm relationship with both Luc and his

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eldest brother, Jean-Élie, a linguistics scholar. A photograph of all three brothers as children formed the basis for a mail art piece that subsequently became known as *Boltanski et ses frères* (*Boltanski and his brothers*, 1970). In the period under discussion Christian seems to have been especially close to Luc, who took active interest in his development as an artist.⁶⁹ Luc's sociological research on photography certainly provided a sub-text for Christian's artistic projects, according to Richard Hobbs, who produced a detailed study of the intellectual exchanges between the brothers over several decades.⁷⁰ Hobbs is careful to explain, however, that this was not a just a matter of Christian being influenced by Luc's research, explaining that he 'may simply have noted sociological findings of his brother's work that he went on to exploit in his own way' (212).

Un art moyen and *Images modèles* both emerged from the post-war economic boom of 'les trente glorieuses', a period of thirty years of regeneration, modernization and urban expansion in France that brought radical changes to social and working patterns. Rapid mechanization of industry resulted in a reduction of working hours, while rising levels of affluence and paid holidays led to the diversification of the leisure market.⁷¹ Amateur photography represented one aspect of this diversification, and *Un art moyen* was itself a direct product of this expansion: the sociological research was commissioned by Société Kodak-Pathé, the French branch of the multinational empire of Kodak, with an aim of gaining a better understanding of this emerging market and the business opportunities it presented.⁷² This was one of the few occasions when Bourdieu sought commercial sponsorship for a research project, although it is not clear how, if at all, Kodak used the results of his study.⁷³

It is a striking coincidence that the initial idea for *Images modèles* originated in a yet another Kodak-sponsored project. The artist explained that a visit to an exhibition of amateur photography for an annual prize awarded by Kodak suggested to him the subject for his new series.⁷⁴ Exhibitions such as these were held regularly across the globe, but in France, where Kodak held a monopoly over the sale of colour film in the 1960s, the brand had an especially notable presence. In this period Kodak took the lead in innovations in colour technology, developing in 1976 the Kodak EK2 camera with instantaneous development on coloured paper. This camera was designed especially for the rapidly growing amateur photography market, its features adapted for those with little or no experience in photography: the manual contained a minimal amount of technical information, the lens was unmarked and there was no exposure control except for the primitive 'lighter–darker' setting, adjustable manually.⁷⁵

By the 1970s, promotional strategies by firms like Kodak led to the creation of a mass market for colour photography among amateurs. The other important beneficiary of the developments in colour technology in the post-war period was print mass media, especially in advertising and fashion. With *Images modèles*, Boltanski investigated the fascination with the cheerful world of colour supplements, while *Messageur's Le Bonheur illustré* studied the seductive allure of colour photographs populating illustrated journals (in French, 'illustré d'information', or 'illustré'). Colour thus became closely associated with these two contexts – the commercial sphere of print mass media and the leisurely pursuit of the amateur. As Nathalie Boulouch has demonstrated, this gave rise to the distinction between the use of colour and black-and-white photography, articulated in terms of taste, artistic value and the hierarchy of arts.⁷⁶ When colour photography started being exhibited, notably after William Eggleston's seminal exhibition in 1976 in the US, and John Batho's and Daniel Boudinet's exhibitions in 1978 in France, these distinctions were eventually recast in aesthetic terms.⁷⁷

Boltanski's technique in *Images modèles*, however, could not be more different from the labour-intensive printing processes deployed by Batho or Eggleston. Boltanski

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emphasized the connection with popular aesthetic of amateur photography through the use of particular techniques, supports and materials, such as medium-format Kodak paper (39.5 × 29.5 cm), both in glossy and grained finish, this latter being the finish of choice of photography enthusiasts in the 1970s. Furthermore, in imitation of the home-grown framing methods of the amateur Boltanski glued his prints directly onto the chipboard, covering its edges with black masking tape. On the back, the labels listed the name of the artist, the date of the work and the collective title of the series. Some of the labels also contained individual titles, many of which are riddled with orthographic mistakes, spelling 'Enfants au chien' ('Children with a dog', plate 8) instead of 'enfants', 'La Tente malve' ('Purple tent', plate 11) instead of 'mauve', and so on.⁷⁸ Poor orthography matched errors of a technical nature in the images themselves, including over-exposure, out-of-focus blur and skewed composition. These combine to evoke the flawed aesthetic of amateur photography as a 'middle-brow art'.

'Unlike more demanding cultural activities such as drawing, painting or playing a musical instrument, unlike even going to museums or concerts, photography presupposes neither academically communicated culture, nor the apprenticeship', contended Bourdieu in *Un art moyen* (5). Shaun Whiteside's translation of 'un art moyen' as 'middle-brow art' made explicit the connotations of 'involving only a moderate degree of intellectual application, typically as a result of not deviating from convention', contained in the notion of 'middle-brow' as defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. This definition foregrounds the question of aesthetic taste, but obscures other connotations contained in the many-faceted term 'moyen' in Bourdieu's thesis. Rosalind Krauss's careful consideration of this term makes it clear that 'the aesthetic dimension of middling or fair as a stage between ... high art and popular culture' is indivisible from 'sociological dimensions of middle class [and] distributed middle or statistical average'.⁷⁹ For Bourdieu, the question of taste is inconceivable outside the considerations of social class: as he demonstrated in *La Distinction* (*Distinction*, 1979), the apparently objective categories of beauty and good taste are in fact produced by subjects in order to distinguish themselves from each other, as one social class from another.⁸⁰ Material conditions thus play a crucial role in orientating cultural practices. Limited material needs dictate that photography serves the fulfilment of practical needs, notably the integration of the family; that it could be an autonomous artistic practice is inconceivable in this context. In this situation, as Julian Stallabrass noted, 'photography's equivocal status places those who seek to make it an art in a very fraught position, condemning them to an activity "uncertain of its legitimacy, preoccupied and insecure, perpetually in search of justification"'.⁸¹

With *Images modèles* Boltanski confronted 'photography's equivocal status' by provocatively suggesting that the shift of context alone can transform the outcomes of a 'middle-brow' practice into museum-quality art. In his assumed role of a Sunday photographer Boltanski took hundreds of snapshots documenting his real life, only to strip them from their sentimental value and private meanings by displaying them in the context of an art gallery. In addition to the joint exhibitions with *Message*, in 1976 Boltanski showcased *Images modèles* in personal exhibitions at the prestigious Sonnabend Gallery (Paris), whose representation and promotion assured him early success, and then subsequently at the Centre Georges Pompidou, which purchased the series for its collection in 1977.⁸² The act of smuggling into the museum poorly-made colour photographs at a time when 'high art' photography was produced in black and white raised the question concerning the legitimizing power of art establishments and the authenticating value of the artist's touch. Is it enough to confer upon a body of work that is indistinguishable, from the standpoint of aesthetics, from quotidian practices, the status of a museum-quality artwork? Boltanski answered

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this question in the affirmative: 'Everything that I do is art since I am an artist. For example, when I take bad pictures with a Polaroid and then show them in an art gallery, they become paintings.' 'Bad pictures' that Boltanski took were gathered in *Images modèles*, which turns out to be more than a photographic project: it is a gesture of provocation using photography. The pictures are but material vestiges of an imaginary intervention into the museum involving a 'huge Kodak machine':

I went to the Kodak factory and they have there a huge machine that produces 1000 colour photos an hour. ... This machine must really be shown to the public, which is why I will try to put it into the museum. Visitors would wonder what's going on. I imagine their reaction: 'isn't it pretty? Since we are in the museum it must be art!'⁸³

The installation of *Images modèles* in France's newly opened museum of contemporary art completed Boltanski's experiment, thereby engaging directly with contemporary debates concerning the place of photography in the hierarchy of the arts, and its relationship to the institutional frameworks of the museum and authorship. These issues were hotly debated throughout the 1970s and the 1980s in journalistic, curatorial and academic contexts, as photography was being recalibrated as an artistic medium and embraced by the museums.⁸⁴ Boltanski's use of cheap materials and amateur-like techniques, developed in the late 1960s in dialogue with the multiple critiques of the values of beauty, craftsmanship and authenticity in art, posed a challenge to the function of the art museum to preserve and display artworks. It is unfortunate and yet entirely congruent with the spirit of Boltanski's provocations that prints of *Images modèles* in the Pompidou collection can no longer be exhibited, their surface irrevocably damaged by the glue used to fix them to their supports. As such, Boltanski's experiments using photography in the 1970s highlighted many issues that would accompany the process of this medium's institutionalization throughout the 1980s, and which continue to animate debates concerning photography's place in the museum of art even today.

Conclusion

Part of the enduring appeal of Boltanski's work for its audiences and critics, paradoxically, lies in frustrations accompanying the process of research, which fuels the desire to know the truth. In the early part of his career the artist habitually relied on ruse and impersonation as means of autobiographic recollection, effectively erasing the distinction between self-reconstruction and self-fictionalization, against Lejeune's prohibitions, laid out in *Le Pacte autobiographique*. The process of critical investigation is further complicated by the fact that many of Boltanski's works structurally contain elements of such reconstruction, thus prefiguring, if not prescribing, the path an investigation might follow. The prime example of such self-reflexive practice is *What they remember*, which could be described as a biography written by its object on behalf of the biographer. As curators of one of Boltanski's early exhibitions concluded, 'the research that we had to undertake and patient reconstruction of the facts revokes certain works of Christian Boltanski, where profusion of autobiographical details conceals more than it reveals.'⁸⁵ The most successful of the attempts to 'reconstruct' Christian Boltanski proceed from the awareness of complexity, if not impossibility, of this task: thus, Bernard Blistène emphasized the constructed nature of the character Boltanski created under the name of 'Christian Boltanski',⁸⁶ while Daniel Soutif went as far as to imitate Boltanski's own tactic, assembling fragments of works, exhibition reviews and journal articles, which he presented without any commentary.⁸⁷

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Boltanski's fictitious reconstructions of his autobiography perform a literal joining together of the person and the work, so that the distinction between Christian Boltanski the artist and Christian Boltanski the fictional character becomes fluid. In the same way as the 'real' Boltanski eludes his biographers, interpretations of his work diverge, encouraged by the artist's acceptance of every critical label attached to his work. It is perhaps through this implicit invitation to viewers to invest his works with their own interpretations that Boltanski follows most closely Barthes's argument in 'La mort de l'auteur', where the authority for the production of meanings is wrestled from the author and entrusted to the reader. Klaus Honnef even went as far as to describe Boltanski as entirely absent from a work such as *Images modèles*: 'the artist as a machine'. Viewed today, it is clear that Boltanski's relationship to authorial subjectivity is more complicated than his early commentators imagined, preserving the tension between private memories and narratives generic in their universal familiarity. Authorless pictures, gathered in *Images modèles*, are a product of subjective internalization of social codes in photography, as described by Bourdieu. At the same time, this series also documents Boltanski's real life and real experiences, and appears genuine in its celebration of the picturesque. In the spirit of a dialogic engagement with theory, this series responded to Bourdieu's sociological research, highlighting a certain determinism with which the authors of *Un art moyen* refused all sense of agency to amateur photographers. While they may indeed be bound to conform to social structures of behaviour, the impulse to take a picture is a personal one, arising from deeply felt private experiences. In this way, the titling of *Images modèles* relates to both the existing representational codes the photographs are modelled on, and any subsequent reproductions they may encourage.

Notes

- 1 Pierre Bourdieu, with Luc Boltanski, Robert Castel, Jean-Claude Chamboredon and Dominique Schnapper, *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art*, trans. Shaun Whiteside, Cambridge, 1990.
- 2 Key events in the history of the institutionalization of photography in France include: creation of the annual photography festival (Rencontres internationales de la photographie d'Arles) in 1970, endowment of the national school of photography in Arles and the National Centre for Photography (le Centre national de la photographie), both in 1982, and photography reviews becoming a standard part of the arts news coverage in major national broadsheets from the end of the 1970s. See Kathrin Yacovone, 'Introduction: Mapping photography in French and francophone cultures', *Nottingham French Studies*, 53: 2, July 2014, 115–21. See also Gaëlle Morel, 'Entre art et culture: Politique institutionnelle et photographie en France, 1976–1996', *Études photographiques*, May 2005; <http://etudesphotographiques.revues.org/715>. Accessed 17 March 2014.
- 3 The earliest evaluation of Boltanski's engagement with photography belongs to Klaus Honnef, while Didier Semin produced a key study on this subject. Klaus Honnef, 'Versuch einer Eingrenzung', in Klaus Honnef and Lothar Romain, *Modellbilder: das Glück, die Schönheit und die Traüme. Christian Boltanski, Annette Messager*, exhib. cat., Bonn, 1976; Semin, *Christian Boltanski*, Paris, 1988.
- 4 Rebecca DeRoo, *The Museum Establishment and Contemporary Art: The Politics of Artistic Display in France after 1968*, Cambridge, 2006. See specifically chapter three: 'Christian Boltanski's Personal Memorabilia'. See also Rebecca DeRoo, 'Christian Boltanski's memory images: Remaking French museums in the aftermath of '68', *Oxford Art Journal*, 27: 2, 2004, 219–38.
- 5 Jean Clair, *Art en France: une nouvelle generation*, Paris, 1972.
- 6 DeRoo, *The Museum Establishment*, 28.
- 7 'Le document photographique nous présente l'être, en son absence'. Jean Clair, 'Expressionnisme 70: Boltanski-Sarkis' [1970], in *Le temps des avant-gardes: Chroniques d'art, 1968–1978*, Paris, 2012, 110. Unless indicated, all translations from French are mine.
- 8 Marianne Hirsch discussed Boltanski's art as concerned with 'postmemory' of the Holocaust in *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*, Cambridge, MA, 1997. See also Ernst van Alphen, *Caught by History: Holocaust Effects in Contemporary Art, Literature and Theory*, Stanford, CA, 1997, 99. For one of the earliest examples, see Gilbert Lascault, *Boltanski: souvenance* [1974], Paris, 1998.
- 9 Nancy N. Shawcross, 'The filter of culture and the culture of death: How Barthes and Boltanski play the mythologies of the photograph', in Jean-Michel Rabaté, *Writing the Image after Roland Barthes*, Philadelphia, PA, 1997, 59–70. Marjorie Perloff, "'What has occurred only once": Barthes's Winter Garden Photograph and Boltanski's Archives of the Dead', in Rabaté, *Writing the Image after Roland Barthes*, 32–58.
- 10 One recent example is Magali Nachtergaele's study of the 'récit de soi' in French art and culture in the twentieth century, where Barthes's *Mythologies* is considered crucial to the emergence of 'mythologies individuelles' in photography, including that of Boltanski. Magali Nachtergaele, *Les Mythologies individuelles. Récit de soi et photographie au XXe siècle*, Amsterdam, 2012.
- 11 Camille Paulhan studied the early critical reception of Boltanski's art and its impact on his career. Camille Paulhan, 'Un boltanski, des boltanski', 2012; http://tristan.u-bourgogne.fr/CGC/publications/image_artiste/Camille_Paulhan.htm#_ftn1. Accessed 12 December 2013. In her PhD dissertation, Kate Palmer Albers sketched a trajectory of progressive evolution of archival strategies in Boltanski's art, from the private photographic album in the 1970s, to the expanded form of the historic archive in the 1990s. Kate Palmer Albers, 'Archive/Atlas/Album: The photographic records of Christian Boltanski, Dinh Q. Lê, and Gerhard Richter', unpublished dissertation, Boston University, 2008. I am grateful to Albers for giving me access to her dissertation.
- 12 See Jennifer Flay, Günter Metken and Christian Boltanski, *Christian Boltanski. Catalogue: Books, Printed matter, Ephemera, 1966–1991*, Köln, 1992.
- 13 Paulhan, 'Un boltanski, des boltanski', unpaginated.
- 14 'Par opposition à toutes formes de fiction, la biographie et l'autobiographie sont des textes référentiels: exactement comme le discours scientifique ou historique, ils prétendent apporter

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- une information sur une "réalité" extérieure au texte, et donc se soumettre à une épreuve de vérification. Leur but n'est pas la simple vraisemblance, mais la ressemblance au vrai.' Philippe Lejeune, *Le Pacte autobiographique*, Paris, 1975, 36.
- 15 André Bazin, 'The ontology of the photographic image' [1945], in *What is Cinema?*, selected and trans. Hugh Gray, Berkeley, CA, 1967, 9–16.
 - 16 Delphine Renard, 'Entretien avec Christian Boltanski', in Bernard Blistène, Dominique Bozo, Serge Lemoine, Tadeusz Kantor, Delphine Renard, Günter Metken, Gilbert Lascault, Klaus Honnef, Dominique Viéville, Christian Boltanski, exhib. cat., Paris, 1984, 74.
 - 17 Monika Steinhauser, 'Images stimuli', in Bernhard Jussen, ed., *Signal – Christian Boltanski. Von der künstlerischen Produktion der Geschichte 5*, trans. Ginger Diekmann, Göttingen, 2004, 102–33 (105).
 - 18 Perin Emel Yavuz discusses *Les Snyètes comiques* as a quintessential example of Boltanski's hoax ('supercherie') in 'Les Snyètes comiques de Christian Boltanski ou la mise en échec de C.B.', in Catherine Emerson and Maria Scott, eds, *French Trickery: Les Supercheries littéraires et visuelles*, Bern, 2006, 63–81.
 - 19 '[Les Snyètes comiques], c'est du Babar: le papa est méchant, le grand-père est gâteux, les enfants vont à l'école...' Christian Boltanski and Catherine Grenier, *La vie possible de Christian Boltanski*, Paris, 2007, 98. This was said in response to the interviewer's question whether *Les Snyètes comiques* are based on any real childhood recollections, which Boltanski denied. The artist refers to the French children's classic, Jean de Brunhoff's *Babar the Elephant*.
 - 20 Christian Boltanski, 'Ce don't ils se souviennent', *Fig. et Fourbis*, Paris, 1990, 77–93.
 - 21 Boltanski included *I Remember* in the 'Artist's Choice' section of a major monograph dedicated to his work in acknowledgement of Perec's significance for his work. Didier Semin, Tamar Garb and Donald Kuspit, *Christian Boltanski*, London, 2004, 118–19.
 - 22 Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* [1975], trans. Richard Howard, New York, 1977, 56.
 - 23 Johnnie Gratton, 'Roland Barthes Par Roland Barthes: Autobiography and the notion of expression', *Romance Studies*, 5: 1, 1987, 57–65.
 - 24 'La transparence du langage, et ... en l'existence d'un sujet plein qui s'exprime à travers lui'. Philippe Lejeune, 'Le pacte autobiographique (bis)' [1981], in *Moi aussi*, Paris, 1986, 13–35 (30).
 - 25 'Une biographie totalement fautive et donnée comme fautive avec toutes sortes de fausses preuves.' Alain Fleischer and Didier Semin, 'Christian Boltanski, la revanche de la maladresse: interview', *Art Press*, 128, September 1988, 4–9 (6).
 - 26 Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image, Music, Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath, New York, 1977, 142–8.
 - 27 Roland Barthes, 'Responses: Interview with Td Quel' [1971], in Patrick French and Roland-François Lack, eds, *The Td Quel Reader*, London, 1998, 249–67 (266). Original emphasis.
 - 28 See Natalie Adamson and Linda Goddard, 'Introduction. Artists' statements: Origins, intentions, exegesis', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 48: 4, October 2012, 363–75. On the subject of artists' interview, see Johanna Burton and Lisa Pasquariello, "'Ask somebody else something else': Analyzing the artist interview', *Art Journal*, 64: 3, Fall 2005, 46–9.
 - 29 See, for example, 'Monument à une personne inconnue: Six questions à Christian Boltanski', *Art Actuel*, *Skin Annual*, Geneva, 1975, 147–8. Fragment reprinted in Lynn Gumpert, *Christian Boltanski*, Ann Arbor, MI, 1994, 171–2.
 - 30 'Christian, Carrion, Clown and Jew: Christian Boltanski interviewed by Georgia Marsh, revised by Christian Boltanski', in *Christian Boltanski: Reconstitution*, exhib. cat., London, 1990, unpaginated.
 - 31 'Boltanski semble toujours en accord avec la critique: si on le qualifie d'artiste de la mémoire, il l'accepte. Si on le critique en le jugeant artiste officiel, il se déclare artiste officiel. Si on lui oppose de toujours travailler sur les mêmes sujets, il rappelle que l'artiste ne travaille jamais que sur la même idée. Si on lui reproche d'instrumentaliser certains sujets, il rappelle qu'il se voit comme un mauvais prêcheur. Toute critique négative semble être digérée dans un dispositif d'une intelligence fascinante, qui efface la personnalité de l'artiste pour lui en créer des dizaines, en apparence contradictoires et pourtant réunies.' Paulhan, 'Un boltanski, des boltanski', unpaginated.
 - 32 'Annette Messenger, interview with Jacques Clysessen', in *Identité/Identifications*, exhib. cat., Bordeaux, 1976, 59–62 (59). See also Cyril Thomas and Annette Messenger, 'Mes années 70', in *Annette Messenger: Les Messagers*, exhib. cat., Munich, 2007, 167.
 - 33 See Jean-Pierre Mourey, 'Fiction et mise en récit: Jean Le Gac', in Danièle Méaux and Jean-Bernard Vray, eds, *Traces photographiques, traces autobiographiques*, Saint-Étienne, 2004, 53–63.
 - 34 Jean-Marc Poinsoot et al., *Une scène parisienne, 1968–1972. Christian Boltanski, Bernard Borgeaud, André Cadere, Paul-Armand Gette, Jean Le Gac, Annette Messenger, Gina Pene, Sarkis*, exhib. cat., Rennes, 1991. See also Serge Lemoine, *Christian Boltanski, Jean le Gac, Annette Messenger*, exhib. cat., Dijon, 1973.
 - 35 Suzanne Pagé and Marcelin Pleynet, *Tendances de l'art en France 1968–1978/9*, exhib. cat., 3 vols, Paris, 1979, vol. 1.
 - 36 See Larry Shiner, *The Invention of Art: A Cultural History*, Chicago, IL, 2001.
 - 37 Boltanski, 'What They Remember' [1990], in Semin et al., *Christian Boltanski*, 130–43 (133).
 - 38 Semin, 'From the Impossible Life to the Exemplary Life', in Semin et al., *Christian Boltanski*, 46.
 - 39 According to Jennifer Flay (who lists this work under the title *Lettre manuscrite demandant l'aide*), the letter was sent to thirty people and 'several answers were received in response to this call for help, notably from the critic José Pierre, Alain Jouffroy and Pierre Restany. The reaction ranged from offers of financial assistance to the sharp criticism of such unashamed methods of extorting funds.' Flay et al., *Christian Boltanski*, 27.
 - 40 Didier Semin, 'An artist of uncertainty', *Parkett*, 22, 1989, 26–33 (26).
 - 41 Catherine Millet, *Contemporary Art in France*, trans. Charles Penwarden, Paris, 2006, 27.
 - 42 Benjamin Buchloch noted that the members of the BMPT (Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset, Michel Parmentier and Niele Toroni) rarely, if ever, practised interchangeable or anonymous art production. Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'The group that was (not) one: Daniel Buren and BMPT', *Artforum*, 46: 9, May 2008, 311–13.
 - 43 Sami Siegelbaum, 'The riddle of May '68: Collectivity and protest in the Salon de la Jeune Peinture', *Oxford Art Journal*, 35: 1, March 2012, 53–73 (68), original emphasis. Artists associated with Salon de la Jeune Peinture in the 1960s belonged to the *Nouvelle Figuration* group, and included Gilles Aillaud, Eduardo Arroyo, Pierre Buraglio, Henri Cuoco, Jacques Monory and Bernard Rancillac.
 - 44 Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?', in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, trans. Donald F. and Sherry Simon, Oxford, 1977, 113–38 (130).
 - 45 Perin Emel Yavuz, 'La mythologie individuelle, une fabrique du monde', *Le Texte étranger*, 8 January 2011; <http://www.univ-paris8.fr/dela/etranger/pages/8/yavuz.html>. Accessed 11 December 2012.
 - 46 Sarah Wilson, 'Paris in the 1960s: Towards the barricades of the Latin Quarter', in Eric de Chasseay and Sarah Wilson, eds, *Paris: Capital of the Arts 1900–1968*, exhib. cat., London, 2002, 330–44 (332).
 - 47 Pierre Nora's landmark historical study *Lieux de mémoire* (1984–92) served as the foundation for such a change of paradigm, marking the resurgence of interest in the discourses on memory in the 1980s. See Adrian Forty and Susanne Küchler, eds, *The Art of Forgetting: Materialising Culture*, Oxford, 1990; Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, New York, 1995.
 - 48 'La galerie Claude Givaudan, boulevard Saint Germain, a été un lieu très important pour moi. Givaudan avait installé dans sa cave une machine à imprimer, et tu pourrais imprimer tous que tu voulais en payant le papier. C'est donc chez lui que j'ai fait mes premiers petits livres.' Boltanski and Grenier, *La vie possible*, 32. Only two books were made on Givaudan's premises, *Recherche et présentation et Reconstitution d'un accident qui ne m'est pas encore arrivé et où j'ai trouvé la mort*. Since Galerie Givaudan did not actually publish these books, 'only the address of the editor and not his name appear on the publication', i.e. '201 boulevard Saint Germain'. Flay et al., *Christian Boltanski*, 8.
 - 49 See Jean-Marc Poinsoot, *Mail art: Communication à distance concept*, Paris, 1971.
 - 50 He explained that he felt he had no right to 'annoy' people with no interest in art. Boltanski and Grenier, *La vie possible*, 36.
 - 51 Seán Burke demonstrated that, from the point of view of philosophy, attempts to abolish the author have not only been unsuccessful but are also fundamentally untenable. Seán Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*, Edinburgh, 1998.

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- 52 This series is conventionally dated as 1975, but I propose a more precise periodization, based on first-hand study of the photographs, some of which are marked on the back in the artist's hand with dates ranging between 1973 and 1975. Collection MNAM/Centre Pompidou, Inv.: AM 1977-57.
- 53 'Je fais de la photographie; j'ai perfectionné ma technique et j'essaie de me conformer aux règles de cet art si difficile. J'aborde maintenant photographie en couleur, qui se prête particulièrement bien aux sujets que j'affectionne: tout ce qui exprime la beauté des choses simples et la joie de vivre.' Reprinted in Gumpert, Christian Boltanski, 56.
- 54 MNAM/Centre Pompidou acquired forty-two photographs from the series in November 1977. A further thirty were purchased by the Musée départemental d'art contemporain de Rochechouart in 1988.
- 55 Photographs made during the trips to Berck were subsequently gathered in Boltanski's artist's book *Les vacances à Berck-Plage, Août 1975*, Stuttgart, 1995.
- 56 In the *Photographies* exhibition at Sonnabend Gallery, Paris (January–February 1976), works from this series were mounted in a single row around the perimeter of the entire gallery. At the 1976 exhibition at the Pompidou photographs were arranged, as in the *Photographies* exhibition at Sonnabend Gallery, or in a triple row of images hung without gaps, carpeting an entire wall.
- 57 Catherine Grenier, *Christian Boltanski*, Paris, 2010, 37.
- 58 'L'artiste Christian Boltanski, l'auteur-photographe disparaît presque entièrement des ses images stéréotypées d'un art standard. Pas de point de vue individuel, pas de regard subjectif. L'artiste comme appareil.' Klaus Honnef, 'Un Magicien moderne: Reflexions à propos de l'œuvre de Christian Boltanski', *Artstudia*, 5, 1987, 107–16 (114).
- 59 *Le Bonheur illustré* comprised some 180 pencil drawings. This work is conceptually close to Messenger's *Feuilletons* series (1977–78), and *Les portraits des amants* (1977).
- 60 The installation was part of an exhibition held during the Venice Biennale of 1975. As the title suggests, the project revolved around the idea of a honeymoon trip to Venice, documented by Boltanski in the role of a Sunday photographer, and in Messenger's. The project combined twenty-one drawings from *Le Bonheur illustré* and ninety-six photographs from *Images modèles*. Franco Raggi and Carlo Ripa di Meana, *A proposito del Mulino Stucky*, exhib. cat., Venice, 1975.
- 61 Klaus Honnef and Lothar Romain, *Modellbilder: das Glück, die Schönheit und die Traume*. See also Honnef, 'Les images du bonheur: Christian Boltanski, Annette Messenger', *Art Press*, 2, 1976, 20–1.
- 62 Bourdieu, *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art*, 7.
- 63 Bourdieu citing a direct correlation between the possession of a camera and the presence of children in the household: Table 3.1 shows that in households with no children only 38.5% own a camera, compared to 62.5% in families with one child, and 49% with three or more.
- 64 Bourdieu, *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art*, 35. Again this claim is backed up by the statistics: Table 5.1 shows that holidays do not feature as a subject only in 20% of amateur photographs.
- 65 'C'est avec les *Images modèles* que j'ai le plus explicité la non-réalité de la photographie. [Dans] la photographie, et spécialement la photographie d'amateur, le photographe ne s'intéresse pas de saisir la réalité: il cherche à recopier une image préexistante et culturellement imposée.' Renard, 'Entretien avec Christian Boltanski', 76.
- 66 Max Kozloff, *Photography and Fascination: Essays*, Danbury, NH, 1979, 15.
- 67 Christian Boltanski and Luc Boltanski, 'Christian et Luc Boltanski', in Hans Ulrich Obrist et al., *Conversations*, Paris, 2008, 2 vols, vol. 1, 64.
- 68 Luc Boltanski contributed two articles to *Un art moyen*: 'La Rhétorique de la figure' and 'Hommes de métier ou hommes de qualité' (co-authored with Jean-Claude Chamboredon). Only the latter was included in the English translation of *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art*.
- 69 See 'Les Boltanski, le mythe de la caverne', *Le Monde*, 16 July 2008; http://www.lemonde.fr/culture/article/2008/07/16/les-boltanski-le-mythe-de-la-caverne_1073935_3246.html. Accessed 22 June 2013.
- 70 Richard Hobbs, 'Boltanski's visual archives', *History of the Human Sciences*, 11: 4, 1998, 121–40 (129–30). Hobbs mainly focuses on the brothers' collaborations on Luc's books of poetry, for which Christian made illustrations, as a personal response to the tragedy of the Holocaust.
- 71 Jean Fourastié's term 'les trente glorieuses' ('the glorious thirty') refers to a period of economic boom lasting thirty years from 1946 to 1975. For an overview, see Roger Price, *A Concise History of France*, Cambridge, 2014. For an analysis of the culture and cultural politics of this period, see Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture*, Cambridge, MA, 1995.
- 72 In the preface not included in the English translation of the book, Bourdieu states: 'This publication presents the results of the research undertaken on the initiative of Kodak-Pathé.' ('Cet ouvrage présente le résultat de recherches entreprises à la demande de Kodak-Pathé.') Philippe de Vendeuvre and Pierre Bourdieu, 'Préface', in Bourdieu, avec Luc Boltanski, Robert Castel, Jean-Claude Chamboredon, Dominique Schnapper, *Un art moyen. Essai sur les usages sociaux de la photographie*, Paris, 1965, 9.
- 73 See Deborah Reed-Danahay, *Locating Bourdieu*, Bloomington, IN, 2005, 169.
- 74 See Boltanski and Grenier, *La vie possible*, 109.
- 75 See Brian Coe, *The Kodak Cameras: The First Hundred Years*, Hove, 1988.
- 76 Nathalie Boulouch, 'Couleur versus noir et blanc', in *Études photographiques*, 16 May 2005; <http://etudesphotographiques.revues.org/726>. Accessed 21 December 2014.
- 77 For an overview of the history of the institutionalization of colour photography in the American context, see Kevin D. Moore et al., *Starburst: Color Photography in America 1970–1980*, Ostfildern, 2010. In the context of France, see Nathalie Boulouch, 'Les passeurs de couleur 1976 et ses suites', *Études photographiques*, 21 December 2007; <http://etudesphotographiques.revues.org/1132>. Accessed 21 December 2014.
- 78 I am grateful to Quentin Bajac, then Chief Curator of Photography at the Centre Pompidou, for drawing my attention to the orthographic errors in the titles.
- 79 Rosalind Krauss, 'A note on photography and the simulacral', *October*, 31, Winter 1984, 15.
- 80 *La Distinction*, together with *Un art moyen* and *L'Amour de l'art* (1966), forms a part of Bourdieu's series of projects on culture and cultural consumption, carried out in the 1960s and the 1970s.
- 81 Julian Stallabrass, 'Cold eye', *New Left Review*, November–December 1996; http://www.courtauld.ac.uk/people/stallabrass_julian/writings.shtml. Accessed 7 March 2009.
- 82 Boltanski joined Sonnabend Gallery in 1971 and began exhibiting at the gallery's venue in New York from 1973, thereby gaining international exposure early in his career.
- 83 'Je suis allé à l'usine Kodak et ils ont là-bas une très grosse machine qui sort 1000 photos couleur à l'heure. ... Il faut absolument montrer cette machine au public; c'est pourquoi je vais essayer de la mettre dans un musée. Les spectateurs vont être complètement dérouterés. J'attends leurs réactions: "est-ce que c'est joli? nous sommes bien dans un musée d'art donc ce doit être l'art!" Boltanski, "Tout ce que je fais c'est de l'art", unpaginated.
- 84 Aaron Scharf, *Art and Photography*, London, 1968; Klaus Honnef, 150 *Jahre Fotografie*, Mainz, 1977; Georg Schwarzbauer, 'Kunst-Fotografie, Fotografie-Kunst: Wechselbeziehungen zwischen bildender Kunst und Fotografie', *Magazin Kunst*, 16: 4, 1976; Carole Nagat, 'Les aspects de la photographie dans l'art contemporain', *Zoom*, 38, June 1978, 30–4; Michel Nuridsany, *Ils se disent peintres, ils se disent photographes...*, exhib. cat., Paris, 1981.
- 85 'Les recherches qu'il nous a fallu entreprendre et la reconstitution patiente des faits rejoignent par leur esprit certains œuvres de Christian Boltanski, où la multitude des détails autobiographiques le cachent plus qu'ils ne révèlent.' Silke Paull and Hervé Würz, 'Introduction', in Christian Boltanski, *Les Modèles: cinq relations entre texte et image*, exhib. cat., Paris, 1979, 1.
- 86 Blistène, in Blistène et al., *Christian Boltanski*.
- 87 Danilo Soutif, 'An attempt to reconstruct Christian Boltanski', in Danilo Eecher, *Christian Boltanski: pentimenti*, Milano, 1997.

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