

Image Manipulation and Ethical Issues

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Abstract

In this paper I will be discussing the ethical issues photojournalists and advertisers face with manipulating images. Manipulating images is very easy with modern technology, and the various editing programs. Many photojournalists have been disqualified from contests because they manipulated the photo. Manipulating photos takes away from the image, it's like a misconception of reality. Advertisements are no better because they can be full of lies. Some cosmetic companies try to use Photoshop to enhance their product, which is false advertisement. You can't expect to see a product that way, it's not ethically right. There should be a code of ethics or morals that govern photojournalism and advertising. If one was established for both a lot of these things would not happen, and advertising would be based on the actual product like it should be, not based upon lies.

Image Manipulation and Ethical Issues

With the rise of modern technology, and editing software such as Photoshop and Apple Aperture 3 photos can easily be manipulated. “Photoshop has become so common within the fashion and advertising industry that most have come to approach it with overwhelming indifference, accepting its presence in all images as a fact of life.” (Brown, 2015, p. 89). It’s very sad that we live in a world where it’s normal to see an ad manipulated in Photoshop, or it’s normal to see a photo on the news manipulated. To be completely honest I never put much thought into how often we manipulate images until a few weeks ago, and I now see how much of a problem it is, even in the news. “News organizations, similar to the advertising industry, operate under self-regulating policies that tout an industry standard allowing the “enhancement of photographs for clarity and definition,” but forbidding any change to the photograph’s actual composition.” (Brown, 2015, p. 89).

Photojournalism

I believe there should be a standard code of ethics or morals that govern photojournalism. I consider photojournalists to be reporters, but through photographs because you are still covering an event. The role of a reporter is to represent the public and report accurate information about what happened. How can photojournalists do that if they are manipulating their photos? According to Whitehead “In February the photojournalism world was rocked with the announcement by the World Press Photo that 20 images out of the 90 reaching the penultimate round of their annual contest had been disqualified due to some form of post-production manipulation. Most of the disqualified images were ousted due to alterations within the images.” (Whitehead, 2015, p. 52). To enter your photo in a competition and have it reach the penultimate round to be disqualified because the image was manipulated is awful.

Another example is the Kent State killings photo which is in Appendix A. “A heavy-handed “artist” at Time-Life removed a fence post from behind the head of Mary Ann Vecchio in John Filo’s Pulitzer Prizewinning photograph of the 1970 Kent State killings. “It was done by Time-Life photo for one of their publications over 20 years ago,” Filo said. “The retouching was done with airbrush, bleach and dyes by hand. I asked them to remove the retouched version from their library, but who knows for sure if they did.” (Whitehead, 2015, p. 52). When you look at the photo the reason the fence post was taken out was because it looks like it is coming out of Vecchio’s head, but it looks like they also removed a man from the photo as well. It wasn’t right to manipulate the photo because it is a part of history.

Another article I found interesting involves the French Ministry of Defense and how they developed Tungstene, a program that could reveal a change made to a digital file. Roger Cozien the man behind Tungstene explained that there are a lot of altered images within the press, and wants rules to be established. “We try to explain that we need rules that are understandable and practical for photographers, for agencies, and everyone interested in the image in general. And we need to have the tools to verify that these rules are applied, otherwise, it is absolutely useless.” (Hof, 2015, p. 1).

“A standard code of ethics should be established in photojournalism in the U.S., but the weight falls upon continuing education of photographers and editors. In the end, the simplest solution might be the simple addition of software code.” (Whitehead, 2015, p. 55). “Many would argue that the United States lags behind other countries in its regulation of Photoshop. Currently, digital alteration is unregulated in the United States, whereas many countries are in the midst of proposing proactive measures to minimize the trickery of Photoshop in advertisements.” (Brown, 2015, p. 92). I’m not one bit surprised that the United States is behind

other countries in its regulation of Photoshop. A standard code of ethics in photojournalism would help put a stop to manipulating photos, especially when they are edited to an extent where they don't even look like the original photo.

Advertising

Advertising is a whole different ball game than photojournalism. I doubt that there is an advertisement out there that hasn't used Photoshop in some way. The National Advertising Division (NAD), banned the use of Photoshop in cosmetic advertisements. There was a Cover Girl ad back in 2012 featuring Taylor Swift that got banned because her eyelashes were airbrushed to exaggerate the mascara. (See appendix B). “Although the footnote disclaimer in the ad stated, “Lashes enhanced in post-production,” Andrea Levine, the Director of NAD, labeled the advertisement a “product demonstration.” As the purpose of the product, the mascara, is to “make your eyelashes longer and thicker,” promising “2X more volume” and therefore cannot be digitally enhanced. Consequently, the NAD found the disclaimer to be insufficient and declared the ad unacceptable, forcing Proctor & Gamble into discontinuing it.” (Brown, 2015, p. 88). I don't think what Cover Girl was doing is fair because they are providing a false advertisement; they enhanced the lashes. If you went to the store and bought them, they would not look like they do in the advertisement.

“At the beginning of 2014, advocates finally got the legislature's attention with the Truth in Advertising Act, a bill supporting legislation that would require the Federal Trade Commission (“FTC”) to review the use of altered images of the human body in advertisements. The Act was introduced by a Florida Congresswoman on March 27, 2014 and has already gained the support of the American Medical Association.” (Brown, 2015, p. 94). There needs to be a code of ethics for advertising so we can put a stop to altering body images. It is truly

unbelievable how many advertisements manipulate images and need a set of rules to follow.

Advertisements would be more realistic if there were a set of ethics every company had to follow.

References

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Appendix A



Appendix B

