# CHAPTER SIX

# Visual and material cultures

## *Jennifer Tucker*

*I had monuments made of bronze, lapis lazuli alabaster … and white limestone … and inscriptions of baked clay … I deposited them in the foundations and left them for future times.*
ESARHADDON, king of Assyria, c. seventh century BCE[1]

## Introduction

When the astrophysicist Carl Sagan and his colleagues were invited to assemble the 'Golden Record', a collection of sounds, diagrams and images, for the Voyager II mission in 1977, they reached for inspiration to Esarhaddon, king of Assyria from 681 to 669 BCE, best known for rebuilding Babylon. Esarhaddon wrote his own praises into the bricks and stones of the city for posterity. Likewise, Sagan and his team sought to assemble as accurate a representation of the evolution of the human and natural environment on earth as possible in a collection of 118 images. The 'Golden Record' was launched into interstellar space to 'appeal to and expand the human spirit, and to make contact with extraterrestrial intelligence a welcome expectation of mankind'[2] (Figure 6.1).

Visual materials excite viewers' imagination about the past and also raise the question of how these materials will be viewed in the future. In assembling an archive, whether for a research project or for an institution, the question remains: why do we select this image and what message is being sent to those in the future who might study it?[3] Most of the vast sea of
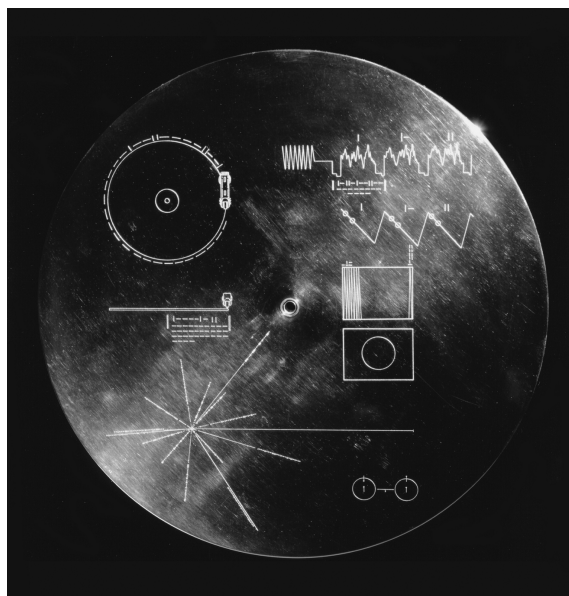
**FIGURE 6.1** The 'Golden Record', launched on *Voyager 1* and *2, 1977. Courtesy of NASA/JPL-Caltech*.

images produced during the course of human history has been lost or forgotten. A small number have been excavated from obscurity and woven into historical accounts as *documents* of the past: the earliest surviving illuminated scriptures, early modern Japanese picture scrolls, sixteenth-century Aztec historical codices, history paintings, photo histories of war and industrial progress, 1950s Biblical epic films, passport photos, illustrated magazines and newspapers, and twentieth-century advertisements and political posters. All of these and other objects, separated from each other by time and space, share a common history that links people and images.[4]

Recent years have seen an explosion of work in visual studies – some of it within social and cultural history, and much of it in cognate disciplines such as art history, history of science, visual sociology and visual anthropology.[5] While visual studies is often thought of as belonging to art history, in reality the field is conceptually, philosophically, methodologically and theoretically diverse. The field involves the study of the relationship of images and the world – and of images in relation to other images. It encompasses the whole range of visuality in the contemporary world, from high art and pop culture, from advertising to the presentation of visual data in fields such as science and law.[6] This chapter considers both what historians might learn from visual culture, and what students of visual culture might learn from the diversity of historians' approaches. The first section traces some of the key ideas associated with the rise of visual studies as an interdisciplinary field of study

since the 1970s. By tracing the theoretical foundations of visual studies and considering new critical frames of analysis in recent research, it stresses the need for more historical research using visual methods. The second section maps some of the different methods and approaches that social and cultural historians use to interpret images and their associated practices. The last section samples some of the new research directions in visual and material studies and asks, How are visual economies and our understanding of the world changing? What are some of the challenges facing social and cultural historians in the future?

# Visual studies

The past twenty years have seen the rise of an increasingly diverse range of analytical methods that may be used to approach visual and material objects in history, offering historians many new ways of thinking about the expanding role of images in people's daily lives and historical imagination.[7] Building on this legacy, the 1960s and 1970s were especially formative in constituting the value of the study of art in social history and that of photography for cultural history.[8] The Marxist literary critic and art historian John Berger redefined the study of art in terms that related to everyday life and contemporary political values with his book *Ways of Seeing*. The book project began in 1972 as a BBC four-part television series that offered a counterview to the traditional vision of art history presented in an earlier BBC series, Kenneth Clark's *Civilisation* (1969). Berger argued against the linear sequencing favoured by historians of art and photography and instead explored the hidden ideologies in visual images.[9] 'The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled', he stated, adding, 'The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe.'[10]

The inherent interdisciplinarity of visual studies was evident from the start.[11] In 1972, the publication of art historian Michael Baxandall's influential *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* introduced the notion of 'the period eye', the idea that people within a culture share experiences and ways of thinking that influence how they perceive images, and what visual practices are attractive at any particular time.[12] Other writings expanded the debate over what some critics began to call the 'visual grammar' or the 'ethics of seeing'. Susan Sontag, in *On Photography*, published in 1977 (the same year that the journal *History of Photography* first appeared), examined the myriad 'problems, aesthetic and moral, posed by the omnipresence of photographed images'.[13] The idea of an 'anthology of images' – of the rapid proliferation of images that claimed attention – resonated in a society that was experiencing the proliferation of images through the expansion of television and advertising, and coincided with the growth of picture libraries that were making image-based material accessible to historians as never before.

The concept of art as an institution permitted scholars like Baxandall to integrate social, cultural and visual analysis in a way that showed not only how visual art was socially constructed but also how it plays an active role in the construction of social orders on a variety of levels, from the interaction order to larger social structures. British sociologist Stuart Hall defined culture as 'not so much a set of things – novels and paintings or TV programmes or comics – as a process, a set of practices'[14] – through which individuals and groups came to make sense of those things.[15] Hall criticized historians and others for the relative neglect of visual artefacts as historical sources and challenged the privileging of linguistic models in the study of representation. Drawing on the work of art historian John Tagg and others, he argued that it made 'no sense' to speak of the 'meaning of photography' without also considering 'the ways in which the meanings and uses of photography are regulated by the formats and institutions of production, distribution and consumption (be they magazines or newspapers, the advertising and publicity industries, camera manufacturers – or other socially organized relations such as the family)'.[16] The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, in *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art* (first published in French in 1965), asked *why* people took to photography and other forms of art, arguing that social practices of making, and viewing art, were powerfully shaped, if not dictated, by social identities, even though the everyday practice of photography may seem to be spontaneous and highly personal.[17] The sociologist Howard S. Becker, in his book *Art Worlds* (1982), treated art as a form of labour ('the work some people do'), while Janet Wolff's book, *The Social Production of Art* (1981), became a leading text in cultural studies.[18]

New developments in post-structuralist and postmodern theory and other fields in the 1980s shifted the framing of visual studies away from 'ideology' and towards the study of identities and their formation, with particular regard to labour, gender, sexuality and ethnicity and their associated epistemologies and practices.[19] W. J. T. Mitchell's writings attend to patterns in the way that people talked about images, reflecting their changing values.[20] In 1988, Hayden White coined the term 'historiophoty' to describe the ways in which the 'representation of history and our thought about it in visual images and filmic discourse' intersected and overlapped; to think about how to think about history was also to think about images.[21]

Vision itself was shown to have an epistemological history.[22] Jonathan Crary returned to Michel Foucault's idea in *Discipline and Punish* of the opposition of surveillance and spectacle, and was interested in 'the new forms by which vision itself became a kind of discipline or mode of work'.[23] Crary proposed in 1990 that the 'standardization of visual imagery in the nineteenth century must be seen not simply as part of new forms of mechanized reproduction but in relation to a broader process of normalization and subjection of the observer'.[24]

This mode of analysis has been effective at examining the powerful discourses that produce the objects and subject positions associated with

various institutions. It is part of a wider study that focuses on how images are articulated within sites of institutional power (such as prisons, schools, hospitals, asylums, and mass media), as well as are agents of bourgeois norms (some historians put family portraits in this category).[25]

Efforts around this time to historicize vision and visuality became seen as crucial to the transformation of modern society and its periodizations.[26] In 1993, historian Martin Jay coined the term 'ocularcentrism' to denote the centrality of vision to the construction of social life in contemporary Western societies.[27] Some critics pointed to changes in the meaning of the visual as important markers in the shifts in historical periods, from 'premodernity' to 'modernity' and 'postmodernity'.[28] It has been argued, for example, both that 'a culture that became "more literate" also became more visual as word and image generated' spectacular realities, and that intellectual experience between the 1430s and the 1670s was marked not by ocular hegemony but by intense visual crisis, given that the act of looking was perceived by viewers as almost never straightforward and rarely to be trusted.[29]

Given the diverse range of analytical methods used to approach the study of images, many of the scholarly disputes about visual culture today are not about the content of particular objects; rather, they may be better understood as disputes over which sites and modalities of images are most important to study how and why, that is, over *where*, precisely, to place the emphasis: 'how an image is made, what it looks like and how it is seen are the four crucial ways in which an image becomes culturally meaningful'.[30] As Gillian Rose perceptively suggests in *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Research with Visual Materials*, the large body of work exploring the meanings of visual images suggests that there are at least four sites at which their meanings are made: 'the site of *production*, which is where an image is made; the site of the *image* itself, which is its visual content; and the site where the image encounters its spectators or users', or its '*audiencing*'[31] (Figure 6.2). These sites and modalities are in practice often hard to differentiate from each other; nevertheless, they help us grasp the complexity and richness of meaning in visual images and discourses around them. A visual history that incorporates the 'site of production' as a site of analysis, for example, may consider how the technologies used in the making of an image helped shape its form, meaning and effect.[32] It might extend to the examination of the social production of images in the broadest sense, such as research on why producers of images might have made them, how social identities were constituted and why technological or economic circumstances were important.[33] Researchers interested in finding out how the meaning of images was made historically at the 'site of the image' might focus, furthermore, on issues of compositionality (such as the organization of looks in a painting or photograph) or on the effects of images such as how people experience them in sensory, embodied and experiential ways. What is being shown, what are the components of the image and how and why are they arranged, and what do they signify? What knowledge is included in (and excluded by) the
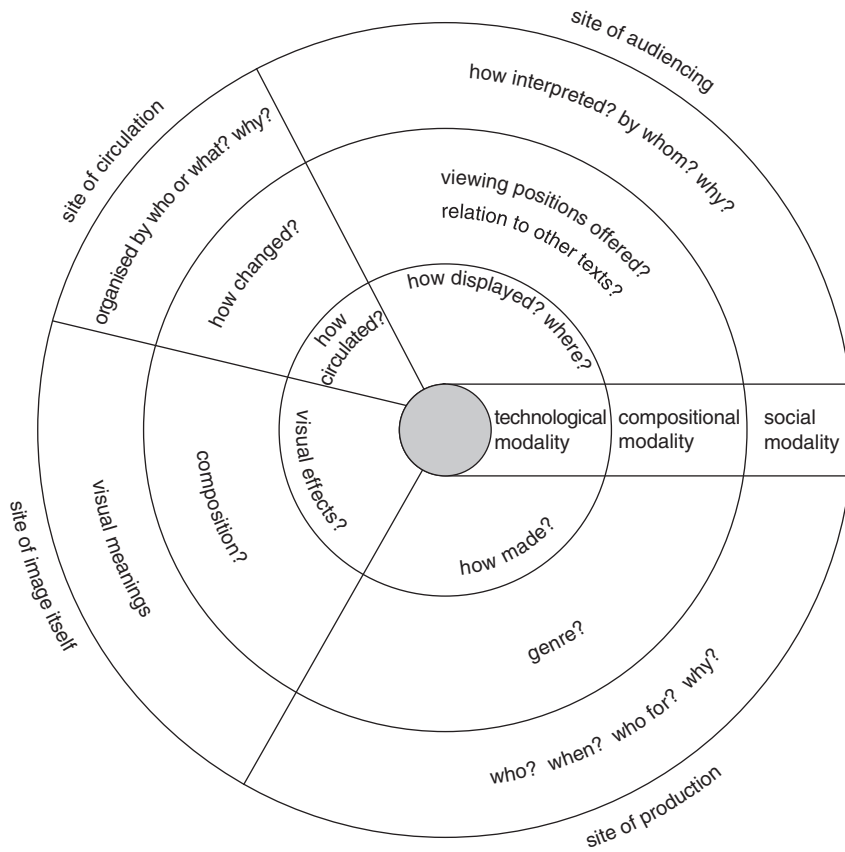
**FIGURE 6.2** 'Sites and Modalities for Interpreting Visual Materials', in Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*, 4th edition (London: Sage Publications, 2016), *reproduced with permission of Gillian Rose and Sage Publications.*

representation? Does the image or set of images belong to a particular genre (is it a documentary, landscape, portrait, news illustration)? The recovery of images as historical sources may be advanced by considering how meanings of images were renegotiated, rejected (or accepted) by viewers: how actively did audiences engage with the image, is there evidence about how it was discussed and circulated, and did those audiences differ from each other, for example, in terms of class, gender, race or sexuality?[34] Finally, a fourth site or 'route', that of circulation, gives a framework for introducing debates about the patterns and power relations that structure the flows of visual information across a variety of media and their platforms. By asking how they structure certain forms of agency while mitigating against others, this framework offers a fruitful mode of enquiry for historians working on all

time periods, in particular those working on contemporary history and with digital visual culture and platforms.[35]

By highlighting a variety of different frameworks and debates about the visual across multiple disciplines, Rose's *Visual Methodologies* both offers up a range of new tools for visual analysis and reminds us about the extraordinary richness and wide scope of visual studies as a field and the applicability of different theories. For example, Roland Barthes, author of *Camera Lucida* (1980), contributed to the invention of a new critical vocabulary for describing the impact of photographic images on people's thoughts and emotions. As a semiologist, he analysed the site of the image brilliantly, yet his framework is less strong on the social practices that do things with images (where Becker and ethnography are more effective). Different research questions will call for different frameworks and approaches.

# Visual history

In an interview in the first issue of the *Journal of Visual Culture*, published in 2002, the historian Martin Jay described *October*'s 'Visual Culture Questionnaire' of 1996 as a 'watershed' moment, in which advocates of visual culture extended its scope beyond the concerns of art history.[36] Yet interest in the visual among social and cultural historians had, by this time, already taken hold. For practicing historians, what has the rise in visual studies meant for historical methods and even for the question of history itself? How have historians worked with images?

With the rise of social and cultural history in the 1970s many historians came to understand social processes and identities as deeply engaged with visual and material practices. 'Living history' was on the rise – and the 'pictorial turn' coincided with an upsurge of interest in local history – with local libraries and archives being a rich source of untapped images.[37] The British Marxist social historian Raphael Samuel recalled his 'shock' at seeing his first nineteenth-century photograph at a seminar on alternative history in Oxford in 1965:

> Somebody brought in some mug-shots of nineteenth-century convicts which Keith Thomas had come upon by chance in the Bedfordshire County Records Office. The faces which stared out at us were startlingly modern, with nothing except for the captions – and the criminal record – to indicate that they belonged to the nineteenth century rather than our own.[38]

Historians began experimenting with new frameworks of analysis, developing them in dialogue with anthropological studies of culture and society and debating the meaning of images that had previously been 'hidden from history'. Explaining the pull of visual sources for social historians, Samuel proposed that

for new-wave social history as a whole, the discovery of photography was overdetermined and it is not surprising that it was so widely and so immediately taken up. It corresponded to the search for 'human' documents – one of the watchwords of 'living history', then as now. It also seemed to answer to our insatiable appetite for 'immediacy', allowing us to become literally, as well as metaphorically, eyewitnesses to the historical event. It also promised a new intimacy between historians and their subject matter, allowing us if not to eavesdrop on the past (a role soon to be assigned to oral testimony) at least to see it, in everyday terms, 'as it was'.[39]

Photography was 'particularly attractive', he recalled, to 'those of us who wanted to … give greater salience to what was called (not without a trace of condescension) 'ordinary' people and 'everyday' life.[40] Yet, as art historians pointed out, 'realism' itself was a historical and aesthetic construct: no more a mere mirror of reality than any other style.[41] Furthermore, neither the new 'living histories' (history theme parks, heritage houses, historical films) nor visual sources were necessarily warmly received by academic historians, who had previously ignored or neglected the analysis of images as sources.[42]

In the past two decades, historians' approach to visual sources has been productively eclectic, yet two related but distinct approaches to visual materials among social and cultural historians are discernible. One method may be described as an intertextual discursive approach, which pays careful attention to the images themselves, and questions of power as articulated through visual images. Historians using this method frequently identify key themes (words or images, and iconographies), and then look for relations between textual and visual statements.[43] This involves not only looking at what is shown but also at what is *not* seen or said; reading for detail; uncovering locations of production and reception; and identifying complexities and contradictions.[44] They may begin with a set of images and then widen the range of archives and sites, asking how and why particular words or images are given specific meanings, whether there are meaningful clusters of words and images, and what objects such clusters produce.[45] Why do certain images and their discourses become more dominant than others? What claims to truth does an image – or set of images or image practices – make, and how, and are there pivotal moments when there is dissent or controversy?[46] Historians may also ask how and why images became collected in the first place (in scrapbooks, albums, picture libraries, private and public archives and museum collections) and what these paradigmatic shifts tell us about the question of history itself.[47]

In this approach, historians tend to employ a hybridized discourse, in order to distinguish the different material histories of production, distribution and reception that are characteristic of image making. In *The Artist as Anthropologist* (1989), for example, art historian Mary Cowling suggested that to understand the meaning of Victorian realist painting (and figures of

the 'crowd', in particular), it was necessary to pay close attention to how Victorian audiences assumed that paintings needed to be read. In *Myths of Sexuality*, meanwhile, Lynda Nead revealed the discursive construction of the Victorian prostitute through a study of recurring images, showing how the prostitute's outsider status was signified visually, in the way she dressed and in how she looked at men.[48] Her focus on *institutional location* is crucial: How do institutions mobilize specific forms of visuality – different ways of seeing the world? How are social relations produced (and how are they reproduced) by different forms of visuality?

Against totalizing accounts of historical processes which took modernity as a given, Nead suggested that London in the nineteenth century is better seen as part of a 'highly concentrated discourse on the modern', linked (like the great Assyrian capital of Babylon, with which it was compared) to splendour but also to degeneracy.[49] Drawing on a variety of different forms of images – news illustrations, paintings, photographs, watercolours, maps, advertisements and banned obscene publications, among others – she showed how these worked to create a modern visual discourse of the rapidly changing city of London (Figures 3–5).
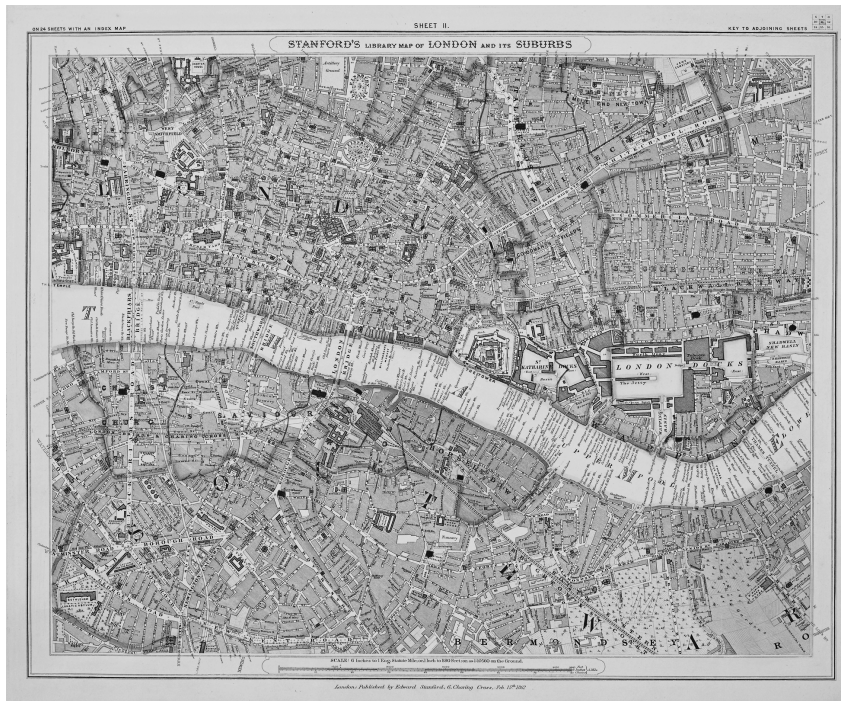


**FIGURE 6.3** Edward Stanford, 'Stanford's Library Map of London and Its Suburbs', 1862. *Courtesy of Yale Center for British Art.*

**FIGURE 6.4** *'The Metropolitan Railway', Illustrated London News, 7 April 1860, p. 337. Courtesy of Special Collections, Wesleyan University.*



**FIGURE 6.5** Phoebus Levin, 'The Dancing Platform at Cremorne Gardens', 1864. Oil on canvas. *Courtesy of the Museum of London.*

A second site of historical scholarship on the visual among social and cultural historians has been the study of 'spectacle', exhibition, and material display. Donna Haraway's work, for example, considered reconstructions of the past, mediated by new visual technologies (holography, visual

exhibits, magazine articles), and suggested that images had played an important role as historical agents: 'imaginary history is the stuff out of which experience becomes possible'.[50] Several historians have argued against the Eurocentrism of many accounts of the visual.[51] Exploring the display and classification of material culture from Africa in local and national museums, Annie E. Coombes showed that visual culture had been powerfully deployed as part of a colonial strategy to promote anthropology as both 'popular' and 'scientific'.[52]

Following the trail of visual objects has altered the way that historians who work on visual sources think about the possibilities and scope of visual studies. Scholarship on art and empire is especially notable, for example, in defining 'art' very broadly to include the full range of print-making techniques, graphic journalism, book illustration, satire, maps, the work of amateur artists, photography and film.[53] The intensive historical investigation of a single event, a community or an individual characteristic of microhistorical approaches opened up new possibilities for the use of visual sources.[54] Characterized by studies of the interactions of elite and popular culture, and an interest in the relations between micro- and macrolevels of history, microhistorical studies showed that people made sense of the world in different ways, and that these forms, or representations, structured the way people behave – and that images are also *arguments*.[55] Images did not merely *reflect* society in some obvious or straightforward way but also may be excavated and contextualized to shed new light on historical processes as well as to show how different societies engaged images – how they used them and put them to work.[56] Historians have identified a 'material' turn in visual studies, in which a primary focus becomes the way in which 'material and presentational forms and the uses to which they are put are central' to the function of images as socially meaningful objects.[57] On this account, visual representations are not merely pictures of things but also are part of a dynamic and fluid historical dialogue.[58] These methods are also rewarding for historians interested in the study of regions and time periods outside the West and, more generally, the global forces of commerce, cross-cultural encounter, migration and identity.

## What's next? Visual history, present and future

New work is now being done on affect and multisensory approaches, including the role of emotion in the reception and production of the meaning of photographs. As the pervasiveness of photographs and their circulation within our society has increased dramatically, historians have searched for new ways of understanding the changing visual economy in historical terms.[59] Studies of social and political activism, for example, are extending earlier work on the visual culture of social movements into new areas of enquiry by asking both how does a focus on activism serve the wider

scholarly project of visual culture studies and, conversely, how does a focus on visual culture advance or narrow the historical study of activism?[60] In an age when societies around the world are wrestling with what it means to see, as if directly, violence and suffering on a previously unheard-of scale, the problem of 'witnessing' has attracted strong interest from historians and others who are interested in the issue of human rights. Researchers studying photographic images of human suffering, for example, are urged to think more rigorously about issues of governance, political rights, modern citizenship and the 'claims' of the photographed subject.[61] At the same time that historians use visual sources in their research, they must also (as with any primary source) try to pick out the traces of less visible discourses that were not already dominant at the time.

These questions also, of course, extend to digital archives. Digitized versions of objects are not the same as the physical objects: much is also transformed and lost (size, colour, texture, dust and weight).[62] Media and technology studies, which interpret the role of technology and hybrid media, offer important insights for historians. Fifty years ago, Marshall McLuhan famously argued that the acquisition of visual skills was a necessary part of civic life. Today, the term 'convergence' – understood as 'a paradigm shift – a move from medium-specific content towards content that flows across multiple media channels, toward the increased interdependence of communications systems' – is used to denote a broader condition of contemporary visual culture, replacing an older notion of media spectatorship.[63] For historians, the term 'remediation' may also be useful in describing the way in which digital technologies draw on the generic conventions of other media while also creating their own genres as well.[64]

Public history, facilitated by digital platforms, is attracting new interest and practitioners among both professional and amateur historians. Recent research breaks new ground in exploring the relationship between memory and photography, for example, offering fresh insights into the social and material practices through which photographs are used and shared in communicating the past.[65] Building on and extending the traditions of scholars who pioneered new work on public memory and museums, oral histories are being used, alongside other visual sources, such as photo albums and archives, to reconstruct otherwise forgotten private and public narratives about the past.[66]

Moving images are also part of both 'official' and 'unofficial' historical memory (in Samuel's terms). Rather than seeing 'history on film' and 'history on the page' as squaring off against each other, historian Robert Rosenstone has suggested that historians should consider 'what sort of historical world does each film construct and how does it construct that world? How can we make judgments about that construction? How and what does that historical construction mean to us?' Only after that, he suggests, can we consider how it relates to written history.[67]

Environmental histories have also started to take seriously the impact of visual imagery and visual practices (including photography, digital image

production, film and new media) in modern society – focusing both on *images of nature* and on the *nature of images*. Popular imagery has been central to environmentalism as a political movement but has been left unanalysed in most environmental histories, which often focus heavily on political struggles, legislative reforms and scientific writings. By contrast, new work in this field puts media images at the centre of its analysis. As Finis Dunaway puts it, 'Media images do not simply illustrate environmental politics, but also shape the bounds of public debate by naturalizing particular meanings of environmentalism.'[68]

Analysis of scientific images necessarily takes into account the ways of looking in art, popular media and advertising because scientific looking does not occur in isolation from these other contexts. As new works by historians are yielding fresh understanding of the interplay between photography and scientific authority, social processes and the institutions that created scientific imagery, the field of science and technology studies (STS) – which has had a long history of engagement with critical visual studies – offers new methods and approaches.[69] Promising new areas are opening up in the analysis of scientific vision and materiality, for example, building on an earlier body of work about maps and charts, extending to historical changes in the visualization of quantitative information itself.[70]

As important as these topical areas are, however, perhaps most important to new directions will likely be the incorporation of new critical visual methodologies into histories of all kinds. As I have suggested in this essay, historians have many valuable tools and techniques that can be usefully applied to the study of visual sources and their significance not only as sources but also to the question of history itself. Moving forward, perhaps it is not merely the expansion of new topics alone but also by incorporation of new analytical methods and research on images that have been previously 'hidden from history' that will be important for furthering visual methods in historical analysis.

# Conclusion

To return to the time capsule idea with which this essay began, 'Photographic technology belongs to the physiognomy of historical thought', wrote Eduardo Cadava in his prescient work, *Words of Light*, an idea that recalls Samuel's reminder that 'the art of memory, as it was practiced in the ancient world, was a pictorial art, focusing on images as well as words.'[71]

The subject of visual and material methods is a vast topic, and this essay can only span some of the leading developments. This chapter has aimed to a sketch a few of the tools and methods that have been advanced in visual research in recent years, yet its larger ambition is to encourage more work in this field. Learning new methods from other disciplines, such as

art history, is important and often vital. Yet, as this chapter has suggested, historians also have developed useful approaches and methods to contribute to advancing the cutting edge of interdisciplinary research on visual sources. In fact, social and cultural historians are particularly well positioned to address questions being raised in contemporary visual and material culture studies: how and why did people in the past turn to picturing 'events' that might count as important for the recording of history? How or in what contexts were images regarded as particular forms of speech? How and why are images used to create and contest worlds, and how do these uses reflect changing historical conditions? What stories about the past are not being told, because images (their presence or absence) are overlooked or ignored?

While past research offers exciting tools for writing and thinking critically about the uses of visual and material sources in history, social and cultural historians must also bring their own methods and approaches to current conversations about the visual and material world their own methods and approaches, shaped by research into materials they come across in a wide variety of contexts – from artefacts in public archives and collections to private scrapbooks, family and corporate photographs, industrial films and beyond. Social and cultural history is a site of important work in visual studies, just as new approaches and methods in visual studies have been an important resource for historians, both in the past and in charting future new directions in historical scholarship.

# Notes

1 Carl Sagan, *Murmurs of Earth: The Voyager Interstellar Record* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1979), p. 1.

2 Ibid., p. 11. Trevor Paglen, 'Friends of Space: How Are You All? Have You Eaten Yet? Or, Why Talk to Aliens Even if We Can't', *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context, and Enquiry* 32 (2013): pp. 8–19. See also William R. Macauley, 'Inscribing Scientific Knowledge: Interstellar Communication, NASA's Pioneer Plaque, and Contact with Cultures of the Imagination, 1971–1972', in C. Alexander and T. Geppert (eds), *Imagining Outer Space: European Astroculture in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 285–305.

3 Whether 'archive' refers to a collection of data or an institution (or something else), it is always worth asking, what are the consequences of certain kinds of classification practices for the production of meaning for objects within it? See Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*, 3rd rev. edn (London: Sage, 2013), pp. 200–1.

4 Key historiographical texts include Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008); Elizabeth Edwards, *The Camera as Historian: Amateur Photographers and*

*Historical Imagination, 1885–1918* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Tina Campt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography, and the African Diaspora in Europe* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Ludmilla Jordanova, *The Look of the Past: Visual and Material Evidence in Historical Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Jason Hill and Vanessa Schwartz (eds), *Getting the Picture: The Visual Culture of the News* (London: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2015); Julia Adeney Thomas, 'The Evidence of Sight', *History and Theory* 48 (2009), theme issue: Photography and Historical Interpretation, Jennifer Tucker (ed.) (2009), pp. 151–68.

5   Richard Howells and Joaquim Negreiros, *Visual Culture*, 2nd rev. edn (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011); Nicholas Mirzoeff (ed.), *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999); Nicholas Mirzoeff, *Visual Culture Reader*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2002); Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Liz Wells (ed.), *Photography: A Critical Introduction*, 3rd edn (London: Routledge, 2004); Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Matthew Rampley, *Exploring Visual Culture: Definitions, Concepts, Contexts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005); Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannine Przyblyski (eds), *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader* (London: Routledge, 2004); Amelia Jones (ed.), *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2010).

6   The term 'visual culture' is often used to refer to the sheer variety of ways in which the visual is part of social life in different in periods and across different regions of the world. It is also proving increasingly helpful in this field to consider also the ways in which images and their associated practices (and the things people say about them) have social lives. See Bruno Latour, 'Visualization and Cognition: Drawing Things Together', *Avant: Trends in Interdisciplinary Studies* 3 (2012): pp. 207–60.

7   Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', reprinted in *Illuminations* (1936; New York: Shocken Books, 1985); Vanessa Schwartz, 'Walter Benjamin for Historians', *American Historical Review* 106 (2001): pp. 1721–43. On Jennings, see Keith Robins, *Into the Image: Culture and Politics in the Field of Vision* (London: Routledge, 1996); and Jennifer Tucker ed. 'Photography and Historical Interpretation', *History and Theory*, Theme Issue 48 (2009), among many others.

8   Nineteenth-century realism itself had an aesthetic history and belonged to 'both the history and the problems of style in European art'. Linda Nochlin, *Realism* (1971; London: Penguin, 1991), p. 7.

9   John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 1973).

10   Ibid., pp. 7–8.

11   As Schwartz and Przyblyski point out, 'a history of visual culture is unthinkable without a willingness to transgress disciplinary boundaries'. Schwartz and Przyblyski, *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Studies Reader*, p. 4.

12   Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972).

13 Susan Sontag suggested that even if they were not considered great works of art, photographs 'alter and enlarge our notions of what is worth looking at and what we have a right to observe. They are a grammar and, even more importantly, an ethics of seeing'. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (1977; New York: Anchor Reprints, 1990), p. 3.

14 Stuart Hall (ed.), *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage, 1997) offered a clear discussion of the debates about culture, representation and power.

15 Ibid., pp. 3–4.

16 Ibid., p. 3.

17 Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), p. v.

18 Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. ix; Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art*, (1981), 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1993).

19 David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1993); Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity, and Histories of Art* (New York: Routledge, 1988); Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (London; Routledge, 1989).

20 W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 105. See also W. J. T. Mitchell, *Image Science: Iconology, Visual Culture and Media Aesthetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

21 Hayden White, 'Historiography and Historiophoty,' *American Historical Review* 93 (1988): pp. 1193–9, here p. 1193; Jordanova, *Look of the Past*.

22 In visual studies, 'vision' refers to the physiological capacity of the human eye, whereas 'visuality' generally refers to how vision is constructed in various ways: how people see (or are made to see). On the historical epistemologies of vision, see Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990); Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007); Tom Gunning, 'In Your Face: Physiognomy, Photography and the Gnostic Mission of Early Film', *Modernism/Modernity* 4 (1997): pp. 1–30.

23 Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 18.

24 Ibid., p. 17.

25 This approach may be found, for example, in John Tagg, *Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Alan Sekula, 'The Body and the Archive' *October* 19 (1986), pp. 3–64; Nikolas Rose, *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006). As a mode of analysis it seeks to examine the powerful discourses that produce the objects and subject positions associated with various institutions.

26 Jean Baudrillard introduced the term 'simulacrum', referring to the near impossibility of distinguishing between the real and the unreal in postmodern historical conditions. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981).

27 Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

28 David Harvey defined postmodernity in terms of the importance of visual images; see Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 63. See also Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House, 1975); Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1967); Vanessa R. Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). Important works outside the Western context include, among others, Sujit Parayil, 'Family Photographs: Visual Mediation of the Social', *Critical Quarterly* 56 (2014): pp. 1–20; Laikwan Pang, *The Distorting Mirror: Visual Modernity in China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007); Wolfram Hartmann, Jeremy Silvester and Patricia Hayes (eds), *The Colonising Camera: Photographs in the Making of Namibian History* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999); Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

29 Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities*, p. 3; Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); and, for a historical overview of recent historical writings about images, Alexander Mark, 'Knowing Images', *Renaissance Quarterly* 69 (2016): pp. 100–13.

30 Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, p. 19.

31 Rose argues that each of these sites has corresponding 'modalities': 'technological,' 'compositional', and 'social'. 'Social modalities' may include technological considerations (relevant to how an image is made but also to how it travels and is used or displayed); 'compositional' factors are defined as the material qualities of an image or visual object, and 'social' ones refer to the 'range of economic, social and political relations, institutions and practices that surround an image and through which it is seen and used'. Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, p. 19; italics in original.

32 Study of technological effects must trace out, however, differences between *expectations* about a given technology versus what that technology is actually used to do.

33 For two excellent explorations of how social and political identities are mobilized in the making of images, see Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Leigh Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

34 Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, esp. pp. 30–40.

35 Discussed in the fourth edition of Rose, *Visual Methodologies*.

36  For Jay, this included 'all manifestations of optical experience, all variants of visual practice', not just the 'rhetoric of images'. Martin Jay, 'Cultural Relativism and the Visual Turn', *Journal of Visual Culture* 1 (2002): p. 42; Martin Jay and Teresa Brennan (eds), *Vision in Context: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Sight* (London: Routledge, 1996).

37  One type of discursive analysis sees archives as part of a larger data set; another is interested in their effects on the meanings that they produce. Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, p. 20.

38  Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture*, vol. 1 (New York: Verso Books, 1996), pp. 315–80, here p. 315).

39  Ibid., pp. 319–20.

40  Ibid., pp. 320–1.

41  T. J. Clark, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); Nochlin, *Realism*.

42  Heritage, Samuel declared, stood falsely 'accused of trivializing the past, playing with history, focusing on unworthy objects' such as pictures. *Theatres of Memory*, p. 265. Samuel's critique of academic history was linked to a broader critique of the lack of visual training by historians: 'Our whole training predisposes us to give a privileged place to the written word, to hold the visual (and the verbal) in comparatively low esteem, and to regard imagery as a kind of trap … If we use graphics at all it will be for purposes of illustrations, seldom as primary texts, and it may be indicative of this that, as with material artefacts, we do not even have footnote conventions for referencing them'. *Theatres of Memory*, pp. 268–9.

43  The art historian Erwin Panofsky defined iconography as the study of the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to their form alone. The subject refers to the need for understanding the compendia of symbols and signs with which contemporary artists and patrons might have been familiar. *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955).

44  Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, p. 220.

45  Ibid., p. 199.

46  For examples of this work, see (among others) Steve Edwards, *Photography: A Very Short Introduction* (London: Reaktion, 2006); Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2013); Seth Koven, *The Match Girl and the Heiress* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

47  See Catherine Clark, 'Capturing the Moment, Picturing History: Photographs of the Liberation of Paris', *American Historical Review* 121 (2016): pp. 824–60.

48  Lynda Nead, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

49  Nead notes that Babylon was a 'paradoxical image' for the nineteenth century, for it not only represented the 'most magnificent imperial city of the ancient

world' but also conjured up images of the mystical Babylon of the Apocalypse'. Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets, and Images in Nineteenth-Century London* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 3.

50 Haraway, *Primate Visions*, p. 188.

51 Annie E. Coombes used the term 'spectacle of empire' to describe the complex ways in which museums, albeit unwittingly, often served as 'a repository for contradictory desires and identities'. *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 2.

52 Ibid., p. 3. Anne McClintock's book *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (London: Routledge, 1995) explored how 'the imperial topos' entered 'the domain of the commodity', p. 214.

53 Art historians have suggested that 'culture and, in particular, the visual image' played 'a formative as well as a reflective role in the course of empire' and that the study of '*empire* belongs at the centre, rather than in the margins, of the history of British art'. Timothy Barringer, Geoff Quilley and Douglas Fordham (eds), *Art and the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 3–4.

54 Carlo Ginzburg, 'Microhistory, Two or Three Things That I Know about It', *Critical Inquiry* 20 (1993): pp. 10–34.

55 Joan Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-century France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 24.

56 Sachiko Kusukawa, *Picturing the Book of Nature: Image, Text, and Argument in Sixteenth-Century Human Anatomy and Medical Botany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012). Kusukawa demonstrates how illustrations were integral to the emergence of a new type of visual argument for the scientific study of nature.

57 Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart (eds), *Photographs, Objects, Histories: On the Materiality of Images* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 2.

58 Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford: Berg, 2001); Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013). See also Lynn Hunt, 'Capturing the Moment: Images and Eyewitnessing in History', *Journal of Visual Culture* 9 (2013): pp. 1–13; Catherine E. Clark, 'Capturing the Moment'; Elizabeth Edwards, 'Photographic Uncertainties: Between Evidence and Reassurance', *History and Anthropology* 25 (2014): pp. 171–88; Jennifer Tucker (ed.), *History and Theory*, 48 (2009), themed issue: Photography and Historical Interpretation.

59 Elspeth H. Brown and Thy Phu (eds), *Feeling Photography* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014); Jane Lydon, *Photography, Humanitarianism, Empire* (London: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2016).

60 Krista A. Thompson, *Shine: The Visual Economy of Light in African Diasporic Aesthetics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015) and her book *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); David Campbell, 'The

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63 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), p. 205; Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, updated edn (New York: New York University Press, 2008), p. 254; Nicholas Gane and David Beer, *New Media: The Key Concepts* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2008).

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69 On the importance of Daston and Galison's *Objectivity* for historical studies, see, for example, Jennifer Tucker, 'Objectivity, Collective Sight, and Scientific Personae', *Victorian Studies* 50 (2008): pp. 648–57; James A. Secord, *Visions of Science: Books and Readers at the Dawn of the Victorian Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Constance A. Clark, *God – or Gorilla*: *Images of Evolution in the Jazz Age* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); Jennifer Tucker, '"To Obtain More General Attention for the Objects of Science": The Depiction of Popular Science in Victorian

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