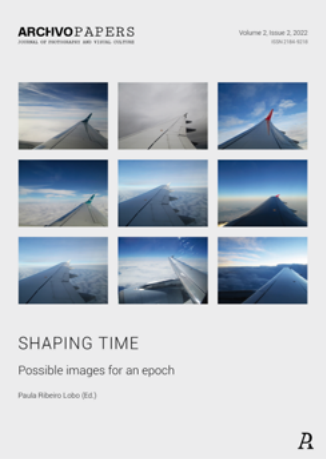


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ARTICLE

SLOW IMAGERY: PHOTOGRAPHY SHARING AS A SELF-CONTAINED AESTHETIC PRACTICE

CLÁUDIO REIS

Abstract

In *Documentum*, a guest-curated newsprint periodical archiving and examining photography on Instagram, photography sharing is described as "the cultural ephemera of our time". While this consideration holds true, it also relates to a common understanding of social media as a somewhat frivolous form of creative output. Focussing beyond the casual and the notational, "slow imagery" identifies in the cultural ephemera of Instagram an influential range of photographic dispositions denotative of an intent to convey an idealised depictive fidelity of things. As if primarily made for the social media stream, these are designed photographs, whose ways of seeing pursue atemporal renditions of the lifeworld, and ultimately constitute an actualisation of celebrated modernist affirmations of photography as a self-contained aesthetic practice. Framed as part of a historical continuum, the slippage of the photographer's status to that of illustrator of a creative brief provides a sound basis for addressing the contemporary emergence of modernist inspired formalist dispositions toward picture-making on a networked medium such as Instagram. This development represents a renewed medium specific flight from history, whose elusive spatiotemporal appeal arises from an interdisciplinary convergence of interests in the shaping of the photographic image, but also from the awareness of having a mass dissemination medium and an audience apparently favourable to the visual simplicity of the modernist pictorial syntax on display. As Irving Penn expressed with great clarity in the symposium "What is Modern Photography?" held at The Museum of Modern Art in 1950, "the modern photographer is very conscious of the time element in the viewing of his work. (…) In consideration of this time element, the modern photographer has learned the economy of means of a graphic artist."

Keywords: Design; Form; Instagram; Modernism; Time.

TOWARD THE READING OF "SLOW IMAGERY"

In *Documentum*, a guest-curated newsprint periodical archiving and examining photography on Instagram, photography sharing is described as "the cultural ephemera of our time"[1]. While this consideration holds true, it also relates to a common understanding of social media as a somewhat frivolous form of creative output. Focussing beyond the casual and the notational, "slow imagery" identifies in the cultural ephemera of Instagram an influential range of photographic dispositions denotative of an intent to convey an idealised depictive fidelity of things. As if primarily made for the social media stream yet traversing the online/offline divide, these are designed photographs, whose ways of seeing pursue atemporal renditions of the lifeworld, and ultimately constitute an actualisation of celebrated modernist affirmations of photography as a self-contained aesthetic practice.

Framed as part of a broader inquiry on Instagram photography[2], the above perception is partly indebted to the research findings of *Instagram and Contemporary Image*[3], an ambitious study by media theorist Lev Manovich which aimed to describe the characteristics that made Instagram "a distinct *image, design, text, narrative, network, software*, and *social* medium"[4] and which tackled the challenging photographic universe of Instagram through an analytical framework based on visual aesthetics, conceptualising three common types of photographs deemed useful in establishing connections with earlier periods in the history of photography – named as "casual", "professional", and "designed" (or "styled")[5]. Briefly, whereas "casual" photographs aim foremost to document and convey an experience, "professional" photographs largely conform to well-established conventions of "good photography"[6], and "designed" photographs constitute a form of "*photography+design*"[7], whose depictive fidelity not only aims for an arresting sense of formal clarity but also tends to favour the pictorial suggestion of a certain mood or atmosphere over clear-cut representational concerns. According to Manovich, both "professional" and "designed" photographs in essence "act to *reduce visual information*"[8], whereby the former pursue what he describes as "the aesthetics of *photo-realism*"[9], and the latter manifest a "distinct *stylized look*"[10], seemingly fine-tuned for the camera phone screen and Instagram.

In what follows, we propose "slow imagery" as a complementary consideration of the "stylisation" of "realism" that underlies the above conceptualisation of "professional" and "designed" photographs, meant to address the contemporary popularity of photography sharing modes of practice marked by an intensified interest in shaping the photographic form through the selective emphasis of certain features and traits. The aforementioned hybrid disciplinary nature of "designed" photographs is therefore understood as but one of the manifold expressive possibilities of what John Szarkowski has famously described as a "picture-making process (…) based not on synthesis but on selection"[11], and which has always maintained a close relationship with the praxis of graphic design – a prolific territory of mutual influences between photography and design of which we still lack a

comprehensive historical study[12].

As David Bate reminds us, "we might be better to describe modernism as a series of different ideas about how to be modern in the photographic image. Composition and subject matter or content are the two key components of the modern photograph, but these are also related to the values and views of the photographer and their role in modern culture"[13]. Largely freed from the revolutionary vibrancy that marked the first decades of the past century, the modernist discourse promoted by Alfred Stieglitz in the later years of the influential photographic journal *Camera Work* gave rise to arguably the most enduring conceptualisation of modernism[14]. Such stance was based on the invested exploration of "seeing" through the camera apparatus – what Paul Strand once described as "the objectivity which the photographer must control and can never evade"[15]. This "new 'modern' way of looking at ordinary life"[16] eventually became a widespread "mode of personal expression mediated via the photographic form"[17], built upon an informal consensus on seeing photographically validated by the mastery of the craft[18] and often unashamedly "[m]ore about the form of the picture than any specific subject matter or content"[19]. As Alise Tifentale notes on the derivative notion of "competitive" photography, "[t]he aesthetics of the photographic form is the main message of such images"[20].

The modernist mindset advanced by Szarkowski's primer *The Photographer's Eye* remains exemplary of the affirmation of photography as a self-contained aesthetic practice[21]. As Christopher Phillips remarks, Szarkowski "provided not only a checklist that could be held up to any photograph for the cool appraisal of its organizing logic, but also a range of stylistic alternatives that were explicitly regarded as 'artist's choices'"[22]. Crucially, the emphasis on the photographic form conveyed through five interdependent aspects – the thing itself, the detail, the frame, time, and vantage point – maintained the notion of photographic transparency as the result of an intentionality whose semantic unravelling is bound to unfold autonomously to its subject matter. For Szarkowski, "it is photography that has taught us to see from the unexpected vantage point and has shown us pictures that give the sense of the scene, while withholding its narrative meaning"[23]. However, as Phillips also observes, Szarkowski's assertive insistence on "the delimitation of formal elements could prove no end in itself, but only set the stage for a move to the iconographic level"[24], ultimately arguing for a medium specific "flight from history"[25] – i.e. from that which lies outside the frame, and beyond the photographer's eye – into the fragmentary space of the self-sufficient photograph, shaped by "an aestheticized authorial 'voice' proper to photography"[26].

While the above considerations on the photographic form are mostly related to artistic aspirations, the "slippage of the photographer from the status of autonomous artist to that of illustrator of (another's) ideas"[27] provides a sound basis for addressing the contemporary emergence of modernist inspired formalist dispositions toward picture-making on a networked medium as Instagram. As observed by Manovich, the innovative interplay between art direction, graphic design, and

photography of iconic fashion publications such as *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue* in the cultural climate of the postwar years, offers several notable examples of ways of seeing photographically geared for the streamlined distribution of arresting, self-sufficient images[28]. Looking at the magazine work of photographers such as Richard Avedon, or Irving Penn[29], the balanced interplay between poetics of composition and underlying representational concerns – in a sense, the material result of attempting to bridge photography with design – arises not only from a design brief and the interdisciplinary convergence of interests in the shaping of the photographic form, but also from the awareness of the dissemination potential of the printed page, able to reach a broad audience thought to be favourable to the visual simplicity of the "modernist pictorial syntax"[30] on display. In the symposium "What is Modern Photography?" held at The Museum of Modern Art in 1950[31], Penn, at the time having established a successful career at *Vogue* magazine, expresses this concern with great clarity:

> The modern photographer stands in awe at the fact that an issue of *LIFE* magazine will be seen by twenty-four million people. It is obvious to him that never before in the history of mankind has anyone working in a visual medium been able to communicate so widely. (…) He then works for publication. He has become, in fact, a journalist. (…) Whatever vehicle he chooses, for the modern photographer, the end product of his efforts is the printed page, not the photographic print. The technical limitations of his medium are the limitations not of the sensitive photographic material but the limitations of the reproduction process by which the printed page is made. The modern photographer works within these technical limitations. He even uses them to his advantage. He is not surprised and saddened by the published result. He has to a great extent previsioned it. (…) The modern photographer is very conscious of the time element in the viewing of his work. He knows that his communication must be made quickly. He knows that his picture may as often be seen hurriedly in a dentist's waiting room as in the soft chair after dinner. In consideration of this time element, the modern photographer has learned the economy of means of a graphic artist. He has digested this economy and has made it an almost instinctive part of his craft. (…) The modern photographer does not think of photography as an art form, or of his photograph as an art object, but every so often in this medium, as in any creative medium, some of the practitioners are artists. In modern photography, that which is art is so as the byproduct of a serious and useful job soundly and lovingly done[32].

Although biassed by a personal commitment to editorial and advertising work, the above statement demonstrates how an emphasis on the photographic form does not necessarily imply the redefinition of "the medium's aesthetic nature in such a way as to set it on an irrevocably autonomous course"[33], whereby seeing photographically with the economy of means of a graphic artist directs the perceptual thinking of the photographic image toward an optimisation of its intended media exposure. By acknowledging the primacy of a communicational motivation, what

is perhaps most remarkable in Penn's noted interest in the printed page resides in its suitability for addressing photography on a platform as Instagram, which often involves an elusive balance between personal expression and "strategic imagery"[34]. Indeed, the contemporary photographer is likely to have an Instagram presence. Furthermore, the irreversible digitisation of photographic processes and the everyday ubiquity of dealing with networked images implies the photographer is at the least minimally aware that the camera phone screen has become for many the quasi-default way of experiencing photography. Whatever the specific motivations and circumstances for engaging with Instagram, those invested in developing a successful social media presence envision how its photography sharing framework will most likely impact the overall experience of the photographic image, with the resurfacing of a modernist emphasis on form proving particularly apt to perform well in terms of user engagement.

Besides an innate conformance with the casual browsing experience of Instagram, the appeal of an intensified interest in the photographic form coupled with its distilling into an efficaciously communicative presence is also a sign of how the modernist ethos of "less is more"[35] rose to prominence in the cultural landscape of recent decades as part of a collective drive for simplicity – as noted in the expanded perception of minimalism as a lifestyle guiding principle. Originally circumscribed to art and avant-garde music circles emergent primarily in postwar North America, the term "minimalist" has since become a popular label for photographic dispositions marked by a clear interest in visual simplicity, even though mostly denoting a superficial relation to its original meaning as an artistic exploration.

Let us briefly consider minimalism in the arts as to better grasp its contemporary manifestations elsewhere. According to Edward Strickland, "[i]n its simplest definition, Minimalism is a style distinguished by severity of means, clarity of form, and simplicity of structure and texture (…) that makes its statement with limited, if not the fewest possible, resources"[36]. In painting, minimalism "culminated the rejective purification of Modernism by reducing the medium to its components and displaying those components overtly"[37], its self-referential approach to form "characteristically reduced to undifferentiated holism or all-over pattern: the field and/or the grid or other regularized geometrical schemes"[38]. Although capable of conveying a similar impression of formal reductiveness, photography has arguably never been truly aligned with minimalism since its innate transparency effect fails to expose "the components of its medium in skeletal form"[39]. Hence, so-called "minimalist" photography is best understood as a stylistic strategy that mirrors toward the viewer the representational markings of a highly selective depictive fidelity – generally characterised by the occlusion of superfluous visual information through careful composition, exposure, and post-production refinements.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, when the above "minimalist" intentionality is explored on a less purist level in what concerns the mental modelling of the photographic form, the resulting visual attenuation of everyday real-world complexities and imperfections is likely to become evocative of what Kyle Chayka remarks as

"an abstract, almost nostalgic desire, a pull toward a different, simpler world"[40]. This more subtle effect is especially palpable in the photographic propositions of influential "slow living" magazines as *Kinfolk* and *Cereal*, whose deliberately curated visual essays, for the most part suggestive of a supposedly more authentic and meaningful life, have inadvertently provided a rather accessible template for a wide range of digital media content creators to give photographic form to the allure of a temporary escape from the daily rhythms of high modernity[41].

From the strategic mental modelling argued by photographers as Penn, to the somewhat more accessible appeal of shaping gracefully restrained visual aesthetics as if through the filter of a designed formula, the enticing nature of "slow imagery" comes into view based on the broad premise of directing the lens toward a precise, at times austere, sense of photographic form. Moreover, such ways of seeing photographically draw on the modernist aesthetic emphasis "on the specific, the fragmentary, the elliptical, the ephemeral, and the provisional"[42] with the economy of means of a graphic artist as to enable self-referential compositions, purposely ripe for the viewer's semantic projection – a creative process reminiscent, in varying degrees of ingenuity, of tried and tested approaches to the printed page innately suited for the substantially distinct tempo of social media streams.

WAYS OF SEEING THE LIFEWORLD THROUGH THE LENS OF "SLOW IMAGERY"

Just as the notion of modernism in photography entails a heterogeneous body of subjectivities, the creative territory of "slow imagery" involves a gradation of stylistic possibilities geared for the relatively small size and forgiving luminescence of camera phone screens. For illustrative purposes, let us now consider the Instagram presence of "slow imagery" according to two main types of photographic rendition – in essence differentiated by the density of visual information on display, from selectively reductive workflows to more subtle propositions of an idealised lifeworld.

October 29, 2019 (Figure 1). A man is pictured in an outdoor space enclosed by tall, pale olive green coloured walls. He is seen from behind, his gaze facing the shaded corner in the background. His slender figure is enigmatic, wearing a dark suit and fedora hat. He is but an element in a composition of simple geometric shapes: the blue sky, the empty corner, the concrete floor, the shadows. The caption includes a single sentence: "[t]hose angular afternoons"[43]. The post belongs to @thismintymoment (Figure 3), the Instagram profile of Minh T, an art director and photographer currently based in Los Angeles, CA, and Lisbon[44].

As described in an online feature, @thismintymoment lures the viewer into "a tranquil world, where modern and contemporary architecture, and impressive natural sites, appear in soft tones and are populated with anonymous characters"[45]. The rigorous editing process on display enables a cohesive visual

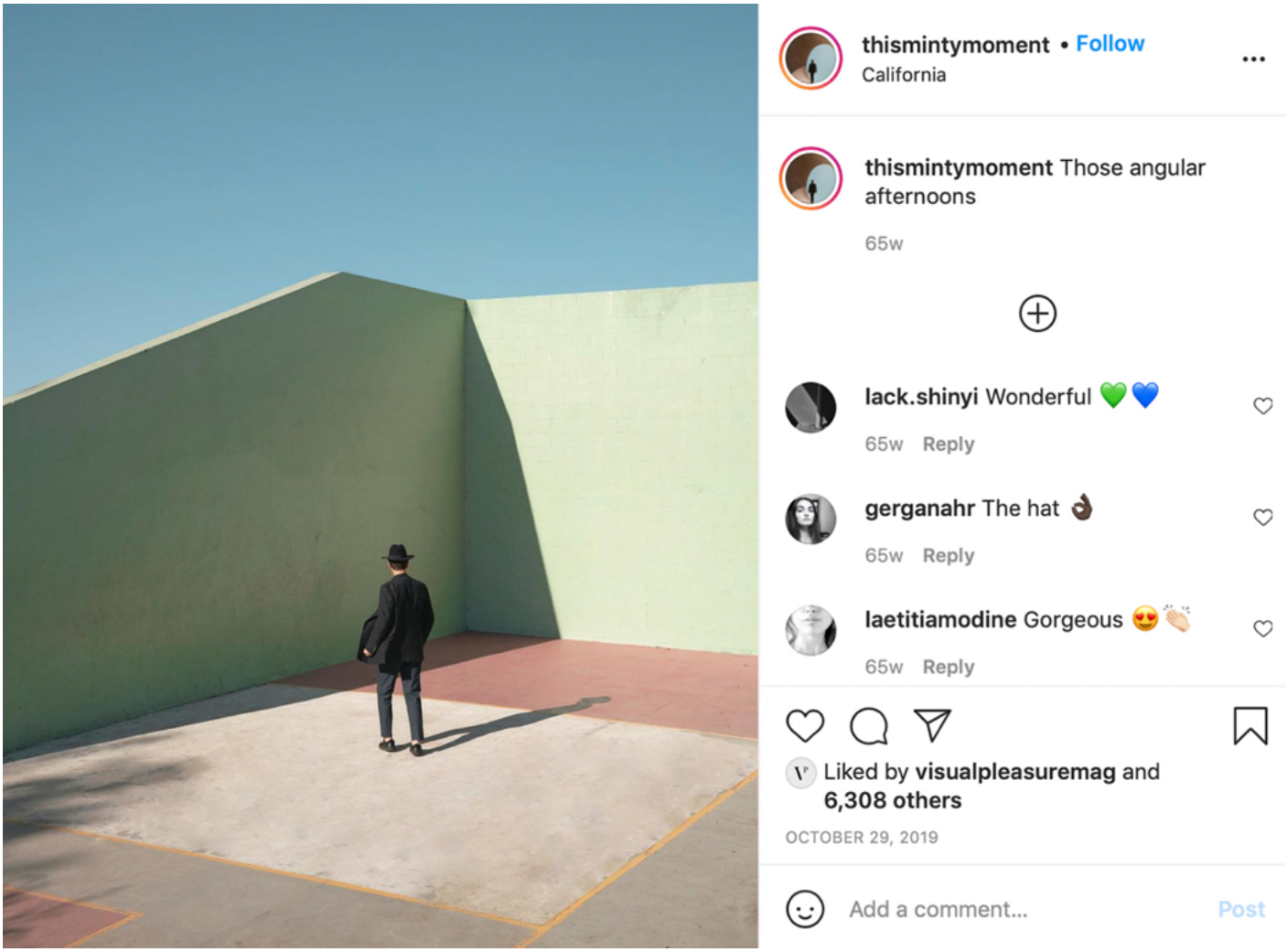


Figure 1.
Screenshot of Instagram post.
© @thismintymoment/ Minh T.

universe in many regards representative of the aforementioned so-called "minimalist" photography, pursuing, in Minh T's own words, a "signature style" that is "about purity, contemplation, and timelessness"[46], and which denotes an interest in engaging with photography and social media not to document things, or possibly tell a story, but foremost to convey an atemporal sense of mood or atmosphere[47].

There is no clear narrative in this episodic world where solitary figures roam architectures characterised by clean geometric forms and expansive landscapes, its contained aesthetic focus also reflected in the sparse textual input on display. From post to post, the modernist tradition of seeing photographically is mostly directed toward the "mise-en-scène" of a performance for the camera, in which the human figure invariably poses in complementarity to the famed architectural dictum of the "masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light"[48], themselves presented as evocative surfaces reflecting a versatile repertoire of locations scouted to become a seductive canvas for the vicarious projection of meaning – still compositions of spatial experience seamlessly blending personal projects with samples from commissions and collaborations with brands. In sum, the transformative attentiveness exemplified by @thismintymoment gives form to a collection of photographic interludes, as if unmoored from



Figure 2.
Screenshot of Instagram post.
© @helloemilie/ Emilie Ristevski

a precise sense of time and place through the methodical commitment to a mental modelling workflow geared for visual simplicity. However, the idealised depictive fidelity of "slow imagery" also encompasses the framing of higher levels of density of visual information, hence resulting in a relatively more conventional type of photographic rendition.

June 23, 2019 (Figure 2). A young woman nears a pristine lake in the wilderness. Her gaze is focused on the pine tree forest on the other side, the mountain range half-covered in mist far in the background. She is pictured from behind, her signature hat only letting the viewer see her long, golden brown hair falling over the wool sweater. The caption reads, "[t]his place..."[49]. Compared to the formal clarity of the settings featured by @thismintymoment, there is a profusion of small details in sight yet the overall visual structure remains simple and precise: the human figure and the landscape, a background composed of the lake surface reflecting the forest, the far mountains, and the pale blue sky. The post belongs to @helloemilie (Figure 4), the immensely popular Instagram profile of Emilie Ristevski, an Australian-based photographer "forever wandering" the globe[50].

Even though popular Instagram topics such as "architecture", "nature", or "travel" are generally indistinguishable in their networked emergence from other forms of publication and exhibition, something particularly suited for the casual viewing experience of photography on Instagram is at play in a profile as @helloemilie. While a content creator as @thismintymoment conveys an idealised depictive fidelity pri-

marily based on environments marked by visual simplicity, @helloemilie demonstrates how a similar finesse toward the photographic form may hold with a more inclusive take on the colours and textures of everyday life, even if mostly linked to the sharing of extraordinary settings. The differentiation from the generic principles of "good photography" may at times be subtle, but it is nonetheless there[51], directed toward the design of quasi-cinematographic compositions as in the previous example, in this particular instance soothingly infused with dreamy colour tones. Like most travel photographers and influencers on Instagram, @helloemilie often depicts the vernacular trope of a single person roaming places, rarely revealing her face while carefully balancing her presence with the surrounding elements. Similar to the tranquil architectural promenades staged by @thismintymoment, Ristevski's reassuring Instagram presence denotes a methodical formal restraint directed toward amplifying our sense of silent participation in the scene – an effect also noticeable in the various landscapes, details, and still life compositions where @helloemilie steps outside the frame.

Selectively shaped through the contemplative gaze of an "invisible" photographer[52], the making of "slow imagery" is set to enable the intensified poetic suggestion of a sense of atmosphere. By this we mean the elusive phenomenological capacity of certain photographs to evoke what Juhani Pallasmaa describes as "a non-material or peripheral experience (…) that tunes our minds in a specific way"[53], hence constructing the view as to heighten the likelihood of triggering a pensive mood, activating our memories and imagination through the common ground that "[p]ictures, objects, fragments, insignificant things, all serve as condensation centers for our memories"[54]. Although such emotional effect is innately tied to the endearing exercise of looking at things with a sense of wonder, these are modernist inspired aesthetic statements whose intensity of compositional restraint and refined colour grading enhancements purposely seek to translate into photographic form the convergence of the specific and the local into a universalised, atemporal version – designed as to transcend the fixity of a moment in time into an evocative semblance for the surfacing of past and future associations.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the essay "Language of Vision" included in *Design Writing Research*[55], Ellen Lupton and J. Abbott Miller remark how the modernist focus on the perception of form presupposes the enduring construct of "a universal faculty of vision common to all humans of all times, capable of overriding cultural and historical barriers"[56]. As observed on Instagram, the "slow imagery" cultivation of a suggestive "less is more" approach to the photographic form entails a similar balancing act in terms of semantic resourcefulness, likely to embody a certain "indifference to cultural meaning"[57] notwithstanding the innate transparency effect of the photographic rendition.

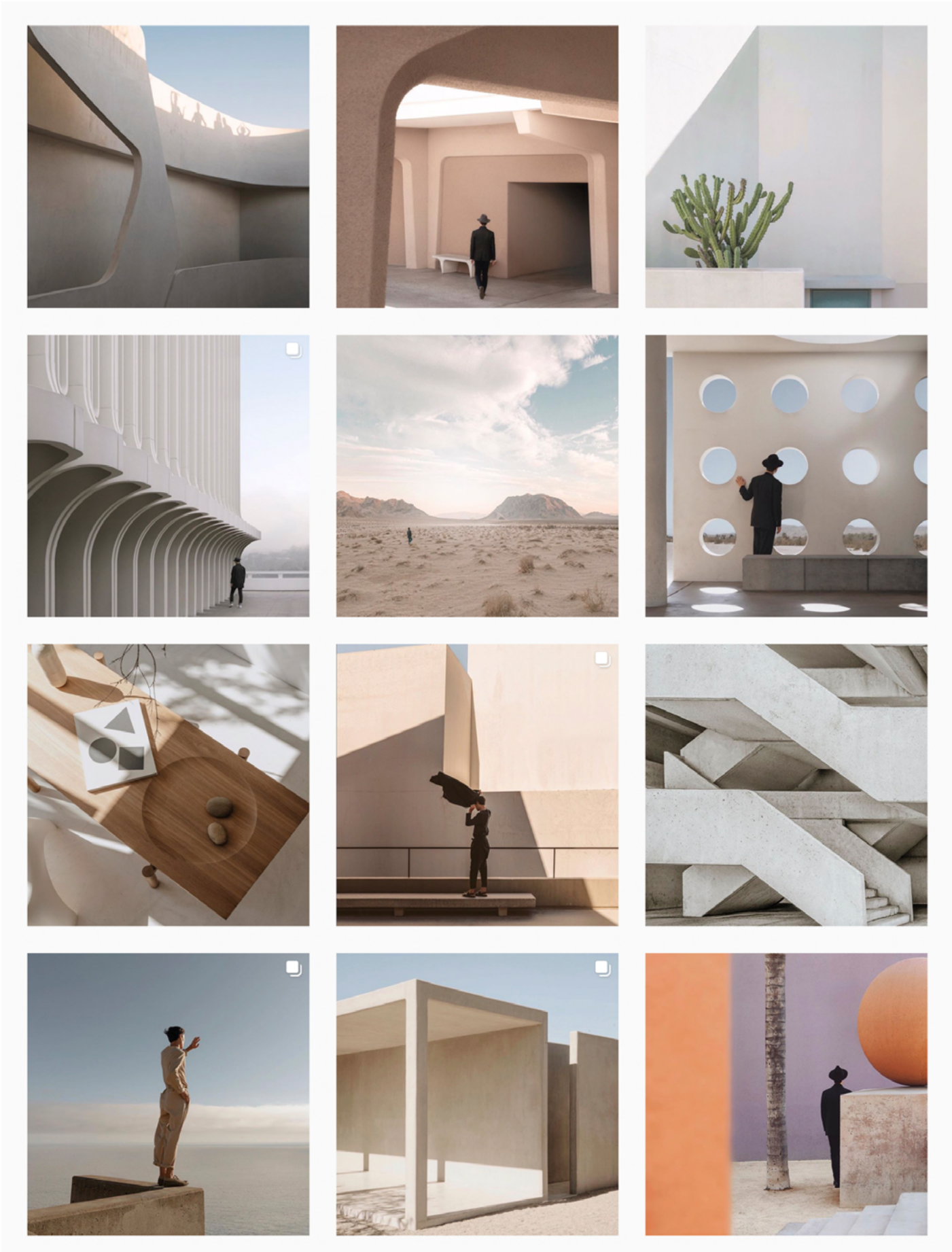


Figure 3.
Screenshot of Instagram profile.
© @thismintymoment/ Minh T.

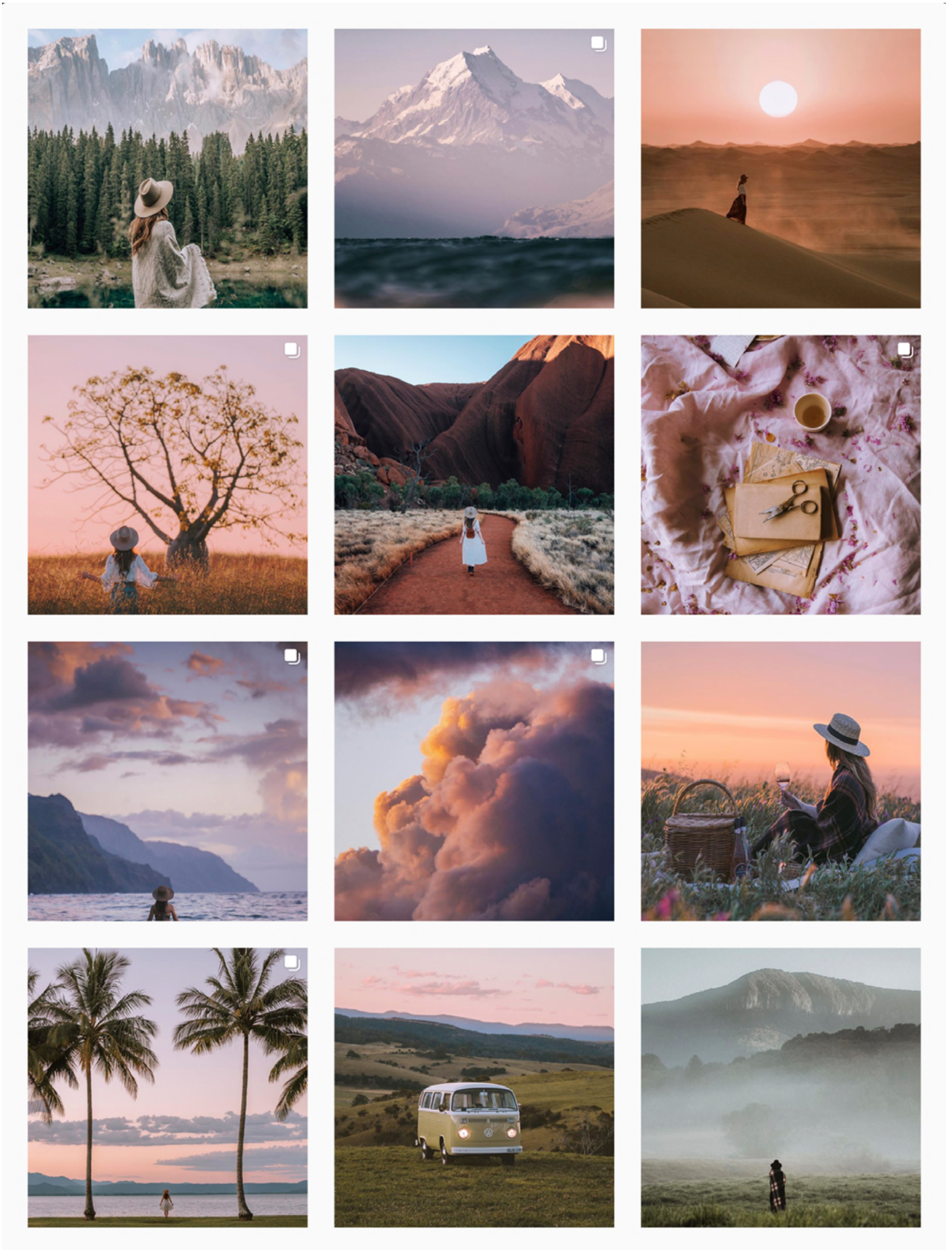


Figure 4.
Screenshot of Instagram profile.
© @helloemilie/ Emilie Ristevski

As Barry Salzman notes, mainstream photography sharing habits unfold by simultaneously "validating who we are, where we have been, and, indeed, our very existence in an increasingly socially networked world"[58]. By comparison to the casual sharing of everyday life moments, "slow imagery" is aligned with a personal interest in, and/or strategic intent of, vicariously providing viewers and followers a temporary escape from the lifeworld, adding to its entertaining capaciousness an empathetic dimension that resonates, even if incidentally, with a contemporaneous longing for the reevaluation of the self[59]. Although easy to apprehend on a cognitive level, the designed nature of "slow imagery" presupposes a transformative depictive fidelity which selectively adapts the specificities of something that has been into the suggestive proposition of a distinct take on things. Embedded in a far-reaching image creation-consumption framework, each new photograph is arranged and posted in consonance with its likely surfacing amid the ephemeral pictorial stimulus of an infinite scroll viewing experience, and reassuringly complemented by the self-branding of a cohesive online presence developed over time[60].

Having proceeded from the economy of means of @thismintymoment to the more inclusive settings of @helloemilie, we have discussed "slow imagery" as a complementary consideration of the routine stylisation of the photographic image that underlies what Lev Manovich describes at length in *Instagram and Contemporary Image* as "professional" and "designed" photographs[61], also at the core of a broad range of inspirational imagery concurrently shared online. As demonstrated by the above examples, the idealised depictive fidelity of "slow imagery" provides an alternative to the randomness of everyday life in addition to deliberately distinguishing itself from the development of quick, arresting visuals which often lack the alluring suggestion of a particular mood or atmosphere.

Interestingly, dedicated content creators as @thismintymoment and @helloemilie excel in terms of online popularity[62] without seemingly making any significant workflow concessions toward having Instagram as a privileged form of photographic output – these are photographs "made" regardless of mobile media and Instagram, yet knowingly "suited" for, and eventually "shared" on, Instagram. While this assertion may raise a sensible argument about the emphasis given to Instagram, such reasoning would fail to grasp the nature of Instagram as a profoundly influential networked dissemination medium of a plurality of ways of engaging with photography. Furthermore, it would underestimate photography sharing on Instagram as a logical part of a continuum of photography practices, platforms, and tools. The methodical commitment to the development of an Instagram presence demonstrated by @thismintymoment and @helloemilie is indeed a clear reminder of the way photography sharing extends far beyond assumptions of cultural ephemera, playing a part in larger trends by attracting the engagement of a substantive audience from post to post. As ascertained through an extensive inquiry on Instagram photography[63], the cohesive levels of visual sophistication and regularity on display provide useful templates to better assess the less methodical

nature of the multitude of content creators whose Instagram presence denotes a similar interest in projecting an idealised and vicariously addictive depictive fidelity of things – a cultural pattern that arguably results from an image economy paradigm that feeds on holding a flux of viewers spellbound.

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1 William Boling, Dawn Kim, Chris Rhodes, and Stephen Shore, eds., *Documentum, The Instagram Series 1*, no. 1 (2016).

2 Cláudio Reis, "Instagram Photography: Toward the profiling of photography sharing modes of practice."

3 Lev Manovich, *Instagram and Contemporary Image*.

4 Ibid., 20 (emphasis in original).

5 For an overview, see ibid., 42-52.

6 A commonsensical expression essentially referring to photographs that follow "the rules of photography codified in the textbooks during the second part of the 20th century and now repeated in numerous instructional videos, photo blog and websites, and texts used in photo classes". Ibid., 58. See 58-60.

7 Ibid., 71 (emphasis in original). As Manovich goes on to clarify, "a *gestalt* made up from two types of skills and media traditions".

8 Ibid., 105 (emphasis in original).

9 Ibid., 69 (emphasis in original).

10 Ibid., 67 (emphasis in original).

11 John Szarkowski, *The Photographer's Eye*, 6.

12 A relevant introductory template for future research on the mutual influences between photography and graphic design is to be found in Ellen Lupton, and J. Abbott Miller, *Design Writing Research*.

13 David Bate, "Photography," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism*.

14 See Alfred Stieglitz, *Camera Work: The Complete Image Collection, vii-xi.*

15 Paul Strand, "Photography and the New God," 128.

16 Bate, "Photography."

17 Ibid.

18 According to Edward Weston, "learning to see his subject matter in terms of the capacities of his tools and processes, so that he can instantaneously translate the elements and values in a scene before him into the photograph he wants to make". Edward Weston, "Seeing Photographically," 134.

19 Bate, "Photography." In this particular instance, Bate is referring to the high modernism of American photographers as Ansel Adams or Edward Weston.

20 Alise Tifentale, "Rules of the Photographer's Universe," *PhotoResearcher*, no. 27 (2018): 69.

21 See Szarkowski, *The Photographer's Eye*, 6-11.

22 Christopher Phillips, "The Judgment Seat of Photography," 36. See 34-41.

23 Szarkowski, *The Photographer's Eye*, 10.

24 Phillips, "The Judgment Seat," 37.

25 Ibid., 41.

26 Ibid., 38.

27 Ibid., 28.

28 See the brief historical contextualisation of "designed" photographs in Manovich, *Instagram*, 96-101; 106-113.

29 For an overview, see The Irving Penn Foundation, "Image Galleries"; The Richard Avedon Foundation, "Magazines".

30 Phillips, "The Judgment Seat," 38.

31 See WNYC, "What Is Modern Photography?"

32 Ibid., 50:48-55:12.

33 Phillips, "The Judgment Seat," 35.

34 See Jonathan Schroeder, "Snapshot Aesthetics and the Strategic Imagination," *Invisible Culture*, no. 18 (2013). As Schroeder notes, "images intended to persuade, promote, or otherwise perform strategic intentions".

35 A tenet of modernism often associated with Mies van der Rohe, alongside Max Bill's "good design" and Dieter Rams' "less, but better".

36 Edward Strickland, *Minimalism: Origins*, 4-7. See 1-14.

37 Ibid., 12.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid., 13.

40 Kyle Chayka, *The Longing for Less: Living with Minimalism*, "1. Reduction."

41 Originally accompanied by the tagline "a guide for small gatherings" inspired by Henry D. Thoreau's *Walden, Kinfolk* was first published around nine months after Instagram launched, and quickly had a substantial cultural impact beyond those willing to acquire its thoughtful designed visions in print, with travel and style magazine *Cereal* launching roughly a year and a half later. As summarised by Lisa Abend, *Kinfolk* "helped to codify, and in the process become shorthand for, a certain kind of Instagram-ready millennial aesthetic for an impressive stretch during the last decade". See Lisa Abend, "How *Kinfolk* Magazine Defined the Millennial Aesthetic… and Unraveled Behind the Scenes," *Vanity Fair*, March 19, 2020; also, note 59 below.

42 John Szarkowski, *William Eggleston's Guide,* 8.

43 Minh T, Instagram, October 29, 2019.

44 Minh T, Instagram.

45 Dan Howarth, "Minh T's Minimal Moments," *A/D/O*, August 30, 2019.

46 Minh T, "Through the Lens: Back in the USA – Photographer Minh T (@thismintymoment)," interview by Cynthia Drescher, *Adorama*, August 27, 2018.

47 As Minh T makes clear in a documentary feature by Adorama, "I think the field of photography has changed so much in the last five, ten years, especially with the advent of social media. Photography is no longer necessarily to document or to depict real life. You can create another world, it doesn't have to be real. It's about an image, it's about a feeling, so it doesn't necessarily have to be constrained by that it has to depict reality". Adorama, "Through The Lens | S06E09 – @thismintymoment," *YouTube*, August 27, 2018, 2:38-3:00.

48 Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 29.

49 Emilie Ristevski, Instagram, June 23, 2019.

50 Emilie Ristevski, Instagram.

51 In terms of visual aesthetics, compare the suggestive wanderings of @helloemilie with those of, e.g., @gypsea_lust, a travel influencer also demonstrative of a sophisticated, yet comparatively more conventional "good photography" workflow. See Lauren Bullen, Instagram; also, note 6 above.

52 The "invisible" photographer is a recurrent visual strategy on Instagram, in this particular example the photographer likely being Jason Charles Hill, with whom Ristevski collaborates in several projects. See Jason Charles Hill, Instagram.

53 Juhani Pallasmaa, "Q&A with Juhani Pallasmaa on Architecture, Aesthetics of Atmospheres and the Passage of Time," interview by Michael Amundsen, *Ambiances* (2018).

54 Juhani Pallasmaa, "Space, Place, Memory and Imagination: The Temporal Dimension of Existential Space," 27. See also Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 3-37.

55 Ellen Lupton, and J. Abbott Miller, *Design Writing Research*, 62-65.

56 Ibid., 62.

57 Ibid. As Lupton and Miller remind us, "[a]esthetic theories based on perception favor sensation over intellect, seeing over reading, universality over cultural difference, physical immediacy over social mediation".

58 Salzman, Barry. "Sharing Makes the Picture," 231. As Salzman goes on to note, "[h]istorically photography was primarily a means of documenting our life's experiences. Ironically, the reverse is often true today. We create experiences and engage in activities so we can document them. And we do so because we have immediate audiences to share that content with".

59 See Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, 1-34.

60 See P. David Marshall, Christopher Moore, and Kim Barbour, *Persona Studies: An Introduction*, 47-52.

61 See Manovich, *Instagram*, 42-52; 58-113.

62 As a frame of reference, in May 2021 @thismintymoment had over 274 hundred thousand followers (having grown to 281 hundred thousand followers as of writing, July 2022), while @helloemilie has since continued to publish posts to an impressive audience of over 1.3 million followers.

63 See Reis, "Instagram Photography."