... if taken seriously, unbecoming may have its political equivalent in an anarchic refusal of coherence and proscriptive forms of agency... there are gaping holes, empty landscapes, split silhouettes—the self unravels, refuses to cohere, it will not speak, it will only be spoken.¹
Let's suppose that it's difficult to know why to take a picture. And if one does choose to take a picture, what to do with it, how to show it, where to store it, what it means, what is its history? Today, there are no easy answers to these questions in a world inundated with debt, violence, and exploitation, channeled through endless streams of finance capital, weapons, and stuff that serves no purpose other than to reify the presence of the human species. Humans are certainly now assured of nothing other than our own vulnerability. We continue to produce in the midst of a Great Undoing for those of us here, now.

Images are more real than anyone could have supposed. And just because they are an unlimited resource, one that cannot be exhausted by consumerist waste, there is all the more reason to apply the conservationist remedy. If there can be a better way for the real world to include the one of images, it will require an ecology not only of real things but of images as well.²

Nine humans—Dan, Dannielle, Evelyn, Jenny, Jillian, Kathryn, Lacy, Luke, and Penn—were strangers to one another before 2016, and now count on one another for Mutually Assured Construction in a land replete of logic, empathy, and futurity. Formulating this thing we call consciousness is nothing but a monumental feat. An unbecoming. This consortium of persons, a constitution of selves, has made a proposal under the term unbecoming.

We started out with beliefs about the world and our place in it that we didn't ask for and didn't question. Only later, when those

beliefs were attacked by new experiences that didn’t conform to them, did we begin to doubt: e.g., do we and our friends really understand each other?  

Stop the clocks, let us be, let us think, no matter what the cost, to connect our im/materi\al\ities, sociologies, fami\liar\ities, psychosexual\i\ties, economics, media tonal\i\ties, genealog\i\ies, political real\i\ties, worries.  

Difference, embodied and spectacular, is a poor condition out of which to construct subject\hood, but can be an effective position from which to perform.  

Are their choices or expressions inextricable from their freedom to create under all difficult circumstances? The hegemonic objective to create is linked to production, value, and economic survival, whether it be personal, collective, universalist, utopic, useful, nihilistic, or dystopic. Will their artistic expressions find cultural and/or financial translation beyond this institutional intra-action?  

The paintings are . . . more group therapy than individual sessions.  

Photography is pictures, a taxonomy that could be defined as being there; or being there. Pictures also represent everything that is not there. Photography often adheres to a false-flag operation of an image, the single image.

However, photography—in its essence—is never a formulation of the single image. Photography is an image in multiplicity, photography is images. Images, collectively.

The frontier between the social and the political is essentially unstable and requires constant displacements and renegotiations between social agents. Things could always be otherwise and therefore every order is predicated on the exclusion of other possibilities.

What does image-consciousness produce? By looking, we are seeing. Seeing as artificial intelligence, offering questions without matter, irresolute answers, answers to future questions, unquestionable answers.

We are called names and find ourselves living in a world of categories and descriptions way before we start to sort them critically and endeavor to change or make them on our own. In this way, we are, quite in spite of ourselves, vulnerable to, and affected by, discourses that we never chose.

Photography is illusory activation, elucidation, propels consumption, motivation. Photography manifests desire, answers to desire; buries ideas, manufactures consent, maintains productivity. It lies, reveals, lies again, is serious, flexible, false, amenable, shocking, tells hard truth, hides everything, all while keeping itself together. It configures, confounds, escapes, determines, arouses, maintains, hypnotizes, is relatively friendly, easy to like and believe in.


What's required is some attempt to think the relation between fantasy and nothingness: emptiness, dispossession in the hold; consent (not to be a single being) in the; an intimacy given emphatically, and erotically, in a moment of something that, for lack of a better word, we call “silence,” a suboceanic feeling of preterition—borne by a common particle in the double expanse—that makes vessels run over or overturn.10

Part of the picture is taking a picture, in the possessive form. As homo economicus destroys and depletes the magnificence of planetary life, there are perhaps more photographs than any thing else. Photography is representational of our dysfunction, and part of it.

There is no resistance to an icon-laden world-for-us.12 The photograph induces compassion fatigue,13 passivity, data retrieval, stimulus overload, historical record, language, narcissism, conspicuous consumption. It functions as enforcer, inscriber, rectifier, nullifier, exploiter, oppressor, transcender, reflector, mirror, object, screen, scene, proof, punctum, bleed.

Taking, capturing, shooting.

The photograph loses its potency and happily regains it with time. Time is generous to the photograph, an object whose position and purpose we forget. A figment of our imagination, a tool, something we need, some thing we need. There are parameters around it, they are rigid and impenetrable, our frame for everything.

11. John Stuart Mill is credited with the development of this concept, based on his essay “On the Definition of Political Economy; and on the Method of Investigation Proper to It,” published in the London and Westminster Review in 1836.
Surface magic: reiterating our selves, defining our contours.

Generational framing consolidates the orientation of criticism.¹⁴

Photographs have a difficult time differentiating themselves from one another. They are similar simulacra, no gallery, museum or archive ARCHIVE big enough, no storage space reasonable, no cloud supple enough, no scrapbook sweet enough. No book is ever complete enough to mold these contents. Our hope, our last memory, our lost memory, the thing between us, a fixed stare.

One is then like grass: one has made the world, everybody/everything, into a becoming, because one has made a necessarily communicating world, because one has suppressed in oneself everything that prevents us from slipping in between things and growing in the midst of things. One has combined “everything”: the indefinite article, the infinitive-becoming, and the proper name to which one is reduced. Saturate, eliminate, put everything in.¹⁵
