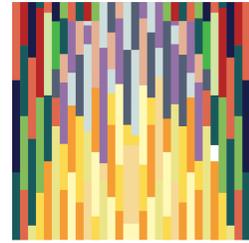


Thinking and Making through Folds

Artwork and essay by Rebecca Howard



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Abstract

Thinking and making through folds is a series of photographic works in progress that deal with the foldedness of photographic prints in relation to the re-configuration of a gallery space. Through practice and theory, I consider how folding a photograph of a building implicates the photograph's spatial qualities and its presentation of three-dimensional space. I bring these ideas in conjunction with Gilles Deleuze's theory of "the fold" (2006), not to illustrate it, but rather to apply the sensibilities of "the fold" to photography practice. I understand folding photographs to be a generative act: the mechanism that produces "modifications or degrees of development ... in itself" (Deleuze 2006, 11). It is a way of acting upon the photograph: a process of constructing through the disruption of pictorial space.

Keywords: Photography, fold, self-reflexive, spatial, dimensional

To fold is to bend, to crease, to twist, to pleat, the double over, to incorporate, to combine, to layer, to bring together, to overturn, to enwrap, to modify, to disrupt. To fold involves, it involves an action, a movement, a hapticity, an agent, a process, a making time.

For Gilles Deleuze, “the fold” (2006) isn’t a simple folding of paper or fabric, but rather a philosophy based on complex mathematical notions of multiplicity, continuance, and difference. Deleuze’s fold offers a critique of Cartesian dualism, where the material and immaterial are understood, not as disparate, but connected through the movement of the fold. Importantly for me, Deleuze’s fold has a powerful aesthetic and spatial dimension, described through the “operative function” of the baroque (Deleuze 2006, 3). Thus, abstract notions of folding are made tangible via its visual character, for instance, “transformational decors”, mirrors, “painted skies” and “trompe l’oeil” (Deleuze 2006, 31). For Deleuze, they constitute an architecture of movement, continuance and re-reading, and something that “endlessly produces folds ... pushing them to infinity” (Deleuze 2006, 3). Thinking with Deleuze, I consider whether folding the photograph might allow for a more dynamic reading: not as a fixed “arrest of time” (Gelder and Westgeest 2011, 64) but as something transformational and in flux, spatially and temporally. In addition, I have in mind his descriptions of multiplicity in relation to the photograph. Like the continuous structure of a labyrinth “the multiple is not only what has many parts but also what is folded in many ways” (Deleuze 2006, 3).

When making this work, I reflect on the reflexivity of the fold and the emphasis it places on the photograph itself. Nothing external is added and nothing is removed, modifications are generated from its own parts, from within. I explore the splintering, arbitrary, and non-linear structure of the fold and its ability to disrupt the intelligibility of an image, while simultaneously creating new forms and shapes.

I begin this project by photographing the interior space of a gallery. Paying close attention to its structural elements, I study the corners, the floor, the edges of the wall, and the white and black curtain that covers the door. I then print these photographs to a variety of sizes and begin making folds, so to create three-dimensions from the two-dimensional paper-prints.

Here, I consider how the gallery acts, not as a space to simply hang the photographs, but as an additional visual and material element, where new views of the space are constantly appearing and changing. Wrapped around the walls and draped across the floor, the structure and form of the paper-prints are shaped and molded to combine with the structure of the gallery, re-configuring the space. The photographs aren't documents of the space, they become additional material and spatial components, like extensions or permutations of the gallery. Through the re-folding and re-photographing of the space, the gallery is implicated in the multiplication and layering of space, revealing a kind of "meta-machine" (Soares 2018, 239). As Yve Lomax remarks, "the photograph doesn't seek to suppress the implication that something else is always involved, always affected" (Lomax 1995, 58).



Rebecca Howard, from *Folding* series
(2019-present day), digital prints, 1189 x
841mm

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About the Author

Rebecca Howard's photographic practice deals with the artifice of representation in relation to the built environment. Using the digital photographic print as raw material, she makes use of re-photography, installation, and sculpture to explore the spatial and dimensional properties of the photograph and its capacity to re-configure and shape our view of the built environment.

Rebecca is currently undertaking a practice-based PhD at Manchester Metropolitan University (2016-present day, AHRC funded). The experimental project explores methods of cutting and folding to produce photographic spatial objects.

Rebecca also belongs to *Proximity Collective*: a group of six artists who, through residencies, exhibitions and workshops, explore the social and spatial aspects of practice-as-research.

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