

The Transforming Aesthetic of the Crime Scene Photograph: Evidence, News, Fashion, and Art

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Abstract

The crime scene photograph, which came into being as part of an official evidence-gathering process, evolved through the tabloid news industry in the mid-century United States into a form of entertainment. From sensational news, the imagery, which had become ingrained in the public imagination, was co-opted by fashion and art to stage photographs that stylistically evoked the crime scene's visual rhetoric. The crime scene aesthetic is now part of the vocabulary of many major fashion photographers, and a number of contemporary artists use both fashion and crime to question popular perception of these images. The various adaptations of the crime scene photograph have altered the aesthetic consideration of the original, so that archival examples from police departments and newspapers are being treated as art in galleries and glossy monographs. These re-imaginings and re-uses raise questions about the impact of staged imagery on the perception of authentic imagery.

Keywords

photography, crime scene, evidence, fashion photography,
murder, news, art photography