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The conversation between painting and photography in the 21st century: An analysis of selected paintings by Peter Doig (1959-) and Luc Tuymans (1958-)

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Abstract

In this research I explore the relationship between painting and photography, focusing on the natures of both mediums and how they are questioned when creating a painting from a photographic source. I have selected works by contemporary painters Peter Doig and Luc Tuymans for analysis, examining the ways in which their images force us to question the assumed 'truth value' attached to photographic images. I also explore the potential for both painting and photography as mediums to portray the internal or the imagined, as well as painting's link to the concepts of artifice and construction throughout history, especially when compared to photography.

In this research I examine the early development of photography, as well as the development of 'photographic' or perspectival language in painting, both separate from and in relation to advancements in photographic technologies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. I then look at 20th Century painters and photographers and their engagement with and criticism of photography through their work, while examining the continuing debate around the associations linked with both mediums. This leads into the examination of selected works by Peter Doig and Luc Tuymans, exploring how their use of a photographic source to create their images raises questions of representation and if these representations can be classified as truthful or imagined, transparency or construction, human or mechanical. Finally in the discussion of my own work I deal with painting's link to the internal or imagined, photography's indexical link to reality, and how through the combination of these mediums these links are challenged. This research also looks at the nature of my subject matter; the city of Johannesburg, as a site of contradiction, existing in a space that is at once real and somehow otherworldly or imagined.