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This art historical close-reading enters into dialogue with theories of class and is located at the intersection of visual history, periodical studies and historical consumer research. While the term "consuming class" is closely connected to the present globalized world, the origins of this social phenomenon date back at least to the 19th century. The article examines the ways in which photography is used to imagine this class and its sense of distinction. Taking as its object Vanity Fair's November 1922 issue, the author analyzes different uses of photography and its relation to readers. Stressing social theories by Thorstein Veblen and C. Wright Mills, she defines the consuming class as an upper-middle class, searching for a point of orientation in high society culture in order to stabilize their own class-consciousness. In this sense, she argues that the visual content of Vanity Fair is rather a presentation for – than a representation of – the consuming class. The article also examines the modern magazine as a display and circulation platform for modern art, photography and advertisement which motivates the visual and social practice of image consumption.

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Consuming Class. Imagining Upper-Middle Classness through Photography in Vanity Fair

Revealing social relations between different classes of society as visual relations, the cover of *Vanity Fair*'s November 1922 issue displays a scene which is iconic for the topic of this essay [Fig. 1]: the full-page illustration by George H. H. H. Clisbee[1] shows a group of people in the center of the image and another person placed in its lower left-hand corner. The latter, a man with short sideburns in a suit, glances through opera glasses toward the group. The group, consisting of two women and a man, is placed on a balcony which is recognizable as a box in a playhouse auditorium. The cords framing the gap behind the man indicate that the background represents a heavy red curtain. The accessories and pieces of jewelry suggest that the depicted persons must be members of the high society; moreover, they appear as a family of two parents and their daughter. However, a closer look suggests a visible conflict between these generations: while the well-nourished man in the back and the woman in the front represent the older generation – indicated by their white hair and old-fashioned status symbols like the diadem, the tails, and the pince-nez – their slim daughter with bobbed hair and less pearl jewelry embodies the cliché of the New Woman. Whereas both women are sitting in profile, the man confronts the viewer, standing upright, thus completing the paternalist image. In contrast to the women, who seem focused

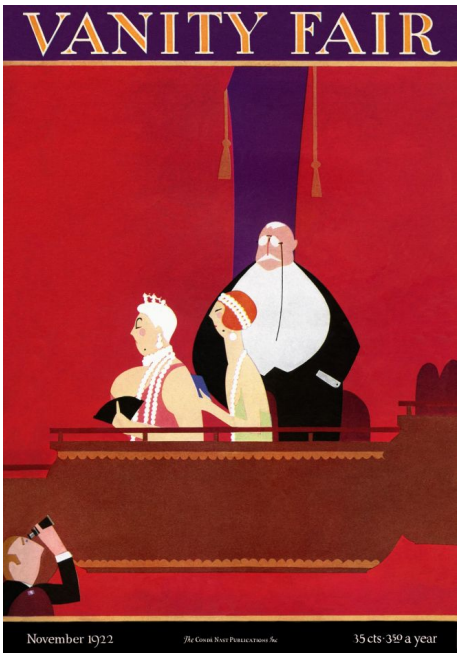


Fig. 1: *Vanity Fair*, November 1922, cover by George H. George Clisbee, Vanity Fair, © Condé Nast

on the stage, the man, his eyes hidden behind his glasses, turns his gaze toward the auditorium. He seems to be observing the young man on the theater's ground floor, who is not wearing any remarkable accessories. Is the latter targeting the daughter, who might be the objectified subject of the young man's desires? Or is he looking at something else? What is he actually looking for?

As I regard this *composition of visual relations* as a *visualization of social relations*, it is not the young man's original motive that the picture concerns. Rather, it is about the way in which his looking at the others is staged in the composition: as looking up to a higher social strata from a lower perspective. The playhouse, whether theater or opera, seems to be the perfect setting for such a "production": following the tradition of the baroque court theater, the spatial structure of the auditorium represents the class structure of society. Until well into the 19th century, the perfect visibility of the royal box had almost the same significance as an unhampered view of the stage. The illustration depicts the negotiation of class identities in an exaggerated manner, by representing only a few stereotypical members of society and reducing their interactions to visual relations.

Located in the theater's space, looking becomes a practice of (visual) consumption and (self-)determination at the same time. Stating this, I refer to Pierre Bourdieu's wide definition of consumption as a form of perception which is defined in terms of taste in its broadest sense.[2] Following this, I argue that consumption is an image-based practice which reproduces a specific understanding of one's role in society.[3] In this sense, "consuming class" implies two ways of reading the term. First, *consuming* class – the practice of consuming a specific class (its habits, material or visual culture, etc.) different to one's own social status, in order to stabilize it. This corresponds to Bourdieu's definition of distinction. Second, consuming *class*, a social stratum mainly characterized by consumption. This latter

understanding is close to a current socio-economic understanding of the term.[4] Nevertheless, the phenomenon dates back at least to 1900, and is closely connected to the emergence of consumer culture.

Relating to this historical background, I argue that the image-based practice of consumption is a leitmotif of an urban social class that emerged massively from the middle strata of capitalist society around the 1920s. Consequently, it was described as the "middle class," and had become the subject of cultural theories by the 1930s and again in the 1950s to describe post-war society. C. Wright Mills' *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (1951) exemplifies this and retrospectively provides crucial observations about the social group analyzed in this essay. Without referring to it, but very similar to Siegfried Kracauer's 1935 study of the middle class, *Die Angestellten* [*The Salaried Masses*],[5] Mills emphasizes employment as the central characteristic of the middle classes, along with the strata's embeddedness in (urban) mass culture. Concerning their lifestyle, Mills sees the growing impact of leisure and consumption since the beginning of the 20th century.[6] In my case study, which is a close reading of *Vanity Fair*'s November 1922 issue, I focus on these two elements of lifestyle by analyzing the issue's imagery. I believe that a detailed analysis of crucial aspects of the readership's visual culture allows for the characterization of its values or habits. Thus, I want to outline the consuming class's (self-)image as promoted by the periodical. Relying on this example and entering into dialogue with (art-historical) theories on class, periodical studies, and historical consumer research, my investigation is connected with interactions between the specific qualities of the medium of photography, the modern magazine as a display and circulation platform for modern art, photography and advertisement, and the social and visual practice of (image) consumption. As a result, this essay will seek an answer to the question of whether the

magazine's portrayal of class is a (reassuring) presentation *for* or a representation *of* the middle class.

While consumption was already a topic of (Marxist) cultural studies, it had become a distinctive field of research into socio-cultural practices by the 1970s. Since then it has developed into a field in which sociologists focus on contemporary developments of mass culture and states of society.[7] Consequently, the field was opened to basic research from a historical perspective, which is a leading trend to date. In several studies, visibility has been regarded as a crucial element of consumption.[8] Especially regarding advertising, the role of images – most of all photography – has been scrutinized.[9] Among these studies, I want to emphasize Jonathan E. Schroeder's observation that photography is "a cornerstone of visual consumption."[10] Roland Marchand's book *Advertising the American Dream* should also be highlighted in this context, as it points out the advertising strategy of giving products a "class image."[11] Nevertheless, my argument exceeds the context of advertising by following Aby Warburg's concept of visual history including "images in the broadest sense,"[12] and thus regarding images of any function in *Vanity Fair*.

Thorstein Veblen formulated a crucial point for this essay's argument in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899).[13] With this work, he set a benchmark for research on consumer culture and lifestyle analysis of Anglo-America at the beginning of the 20th century. His study of pre-Fordist American society is recognized for the concept of "conspicuous consumption" – a phenomenon which is not limited to the upper classes, but also practiced by the middle and lower classes.[14] In Veblen's argument, this form of consumption derives from "conspicuous leisure": in order to represent and reassure esteem, wealth "must be put in evidence."[15]

In this regard, he reveals the patriarchal structure of conspicuous consumption by describing how wives consume vicariously for their husbands.[16]

Although the description dates back some 20 years by then, the theatrical scene on the 1922 cover of *Vanity Fair* [Fig. 1] appears as a visualization of these theoretical assumptions. Clisbee's composition translates the topos of the abovementioned baroque theater into modern times by cutting out the stage and royal box. Here, he focuses on a single balcony with three theatergoers, putting them in the center of the picture. As a result, the box itself becomes the stage for this theatrical scene, and its occupants are treated like royalty. Whereas the women of the family vicariously focus on the stage, the "gentleman of leisure"[17] exhibits his wealth for the auditorium. The man in the bottom-left corner confirms the family's esteem while finding a point of orientation in their status. Thus, for both classes, the theater visit is in order to see and be seen.

If we regard the family as members of the leisure class, to which class does the young man on the ground floor belong? Is he also a (conspicuous) consumer? I argue that his glancing through opera glasses can be understood as a metaphor for searching, or put differently, *looking for* something. Consequently, I argue that he represents what I want to call the *consuming class*: a social class that is in the process of formation at the time, emerging from the middle of society while trying to define itself mostly in relation to upper-class culture. The man's posture – in profile, at the edge of the viewer's space – seems to indicate that he is the role model for the *Vanity Fair* reader.

Vanity Fair as image vehicle

Launched as a monthly magazine in the United States in September 1913, *Vanity Fair* addressed a readership which was interested in art and literature. It was first published as a fashion magazine under the name *Dress & Vanity Fair*. Condé Nast

(1873–1942), the founder of the media company of the same name, bought the former fashion magazine *Dress* in order to gain an edge over the competitors of his successful magazine *Vogue*. When the art and theater critic Frank Crowninshield became the magazine's editor at the turn of the year 1913/1914, "Dress" was removed from the title. Under his aegis, between 1914 and 1935, the magazine's focus shifted from women's fashion to mainly theater, literature, and the arts.[18] From 1913 to 1936, when the magazine was abandoned until its relaunch in 1983, it featured a relatively high number of advertisements. In each issue, more than a third of around 100 pages contained advertising. This ratio suggests that consumption was a crucial element of the magazine's self-conception. Furthermore, with a table of contents displaying rubrics such as "In and About the Theatre," "The World of Art," "The World of Ideas," "Poetry," "Literary Hors d'Oeuvres," "Satirical Sketches," and "The World Outdoors," *Vanity Fair* clearly focused on entertainment and leisure.[19] Crowninshield underlined this program in his first editorial: "*Vanity Fair* has but two major articles in its editorial creed: first, to believe in the progress and promise of American Life, and second, to chronicle that progress cheerfully, truthfully, and entertainingly."[20]

It is important to keep this principle of cheerfulness in mind in order to understand *Vanity Fair*'s images. Crowninshield's perspective emphasizes the entertaining aspect of leafing through a magazine and thereby *consuming* images. By that, I mean that the magazine provokes a specific type of readerly gaze that has less to do with reading as studying or contemplating every picture. When I speak of consuming images, I rather think of a fleeting glance that remains superficial. Not only does the material character of the magazine (handy format; light, coated paper) contribute to this view, but also the amount of space devoted to images, especially photography.

Momentous steps in printing techniques at the end of the 19th

century made it increasingly possible to print photography in mass media.[21] Here, photography had a documentary function at first.[22] With high circulation numbers, the printed press brought new chances for reproduction and range to photography, and a new quality of imagery to readers.[23] Relying on Aby Warburg, newspapers and magazines can be regarded as image vehicles [*Bilderfahrzeuge*] which brought a massive number of photographs to the private sphere, shaping their audiences' worldview.[24]

Regarding *Vanity Fair*, the medium of photography can be understood as the key element of its imagery.[25] The magazine seems to have discovered the potential of photography to simultaneously promote the desire for current images and its fulfilment. During its first decade, *Vanity Fair* used photography in multiple ways – for example as documentation of artworks, goods, cultural events, and public or cultural figures. Furthermore, photography had been introduced to readers as an artistic practice and was increasingly used in advertising.[26] Quite frequently, it was one and the same photographer who provided images for both fields. This can be demonstrated by the following example of *Vanity Fair*'s November 1922 issue, and, in particular, the photographer Paul Outerbridge Jr. (1896–1958).

Photography as art and advertising

At the beginning of the 1920s, photography was increasingly used in both art and advertising. Furthermore, the categorization of photography as one or the other did not matter as much as it did in subsequent decades. The following photographs by Paul Outerbridge Jr. were published in *Vanity Fair* at the beginning of the 1920s, both presented in full page. However, one serves as "advertising" and the other is "art" [Figs. 2a / 2b].

Due to the usual structure of *Vanity Fair*, the November 1922 issue opens with 15 pages of large-scale advertisements, each filling a whole page. These are followed by several pages of short

articles, which are surrounded by small-scale advertisements that correlate to the topic of the article. It is not before pages 25 and 27 that the reader has access to the editorial and table of contents. What follows is around 60 pages of content, displaying articles, caricatures, or photographs, organized on single pages.[27] Furthermore, the sequence of the articles does not follow the systematic table of contents but is completely mixed. Finally, the last pages feature continuations of articles and, once again, advertisements.

Among the first two-dozen pages of advertisements, which are easily skipped by the reader, an Ide collar advertisement on page five (right-hand side) catches the reader's eye [Fig. 2a]: it shows a photograph of a white collar alone on a chessboard in a dynamic composition. Compared to other photographs in the issue, no other object is featured in such close-up as this collar. With a slight top view, the chessboard's grid is transformed into a black-and-white rhombic pattern. The curled white collar is placed along the picture's diagonal lines. The name and size on the inside of the collar are emphasized by a light source located in the right-hand corner above, outside the picture's space. This modern composition clashes with the rich, ornate frame of the picture, which is strikingly characterized by a "Victorian 'spinach' border"[28] and an imposing vignette at the bottom, framing the company's name. This display of the name, in addition to the placement of the picture in the magazine's structure, emphasizes

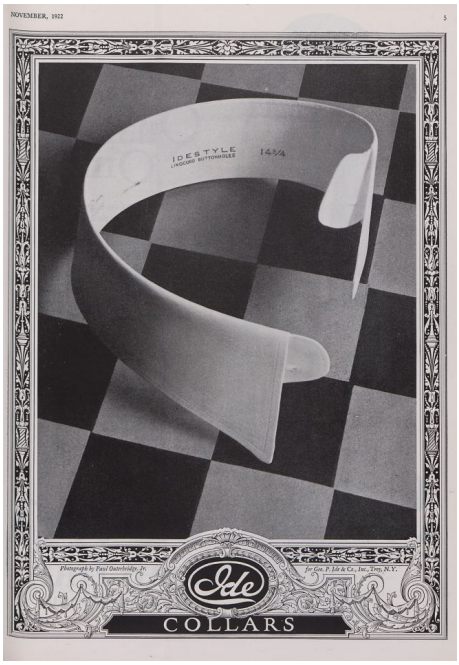


Fig. 2a: *Vanity Fair*, November 1922, p. 5: Ide Collars advertisement, photograph by Paul Outerbridge Jr.

that the photograph is indeed an advertisement.

Just five months earlier, another photograph by Outerbridge had been introduced to *Vanity Fair*'s readership [Fig. 2b]. Page 52 of the July 1922 issue displays a still life, showing a bottle of milk, eggs, a bowl with milk, and a spoon. The objects are placed on a plain, light surface against a dark background. The areas are not separated by a horizon line; rather, they seem to form a corner. Three striking elements of composition, typical of studio photography, are similar to Outerbridge's collar photograph: the close-up with a top view, diagonals structuring the composition, and the invisible light source from the right-hand side, beyond the picture. However, there is a clear difference to the first picture in the repetitive curves which determine its composition.[29] This aspect is further stressed by the title (or is it a headline?) below the photograph: "The Kitchen Table: a Study in Ellipses." In addition, the caption gives further insight into the process of composition: "Suggesting How the Modern Conception of Abstract Design may be Applied to Still Life Photography." Although it is a very short explanation, it contains several signal words, namely "study," "modern," "abstract design" and "still life," which place photography in the context of (modern) art. This matches the rather spare framing, which appears less as a frame than a mat, and its classification in the table of contents' category: "The World of Art."

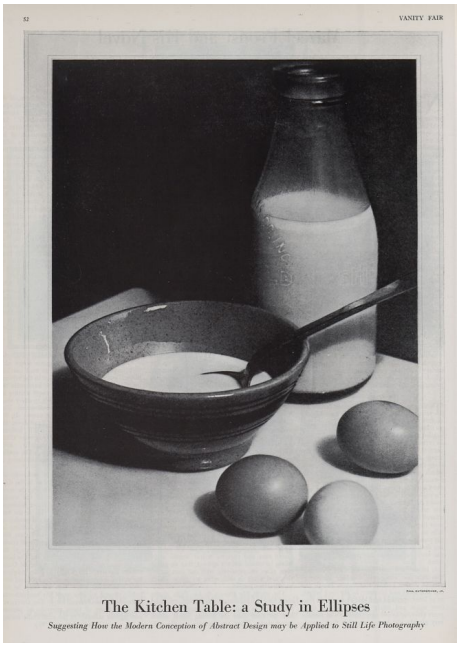


Fig. 2b: *Vanity Fair*, July 1922, p. 52: *The Kitchen Table: a Study in Ellipses*, photograph by Paul Outerbridge Jr.

It is interesting to note that in both cases the photographer's name is only featured in very small characters at the bottom of the frame's margin. This stresses the dominance of the image

over the name of its creator. Indeed, the photographer's marginalization opens up the possibility of embedding the photographs in different contexts and uses. However, Outerbridge is not an exception here: commercial work was customary to photographers at the time, and making a living as an "artist-photographer" was far from reality.

During the last decades of the 19th century, the Pictorialists claimed that photography should primarily be art. However, in the context of American photography, some Pictorialists formed an integral part of photography's introduction to advertising. Besides the example of Edward Steichen, the Clarence H. White School of Photography, where Outerbridge had studied since 1921, should also be named in this context.[30] It is telling that Margaret Watkins (1884–1969), another student and subsequently a teacher at the White School, refers to modernist painters in order to describe a "new, direct attitude" toward advertising photography: "With Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso, came a new approach. […] beauty of subject was superseded by beauty of design, and the relation of ideas gave place to the relation of forms."[31] In the discussed photographs, Outerbridge seemingly adapted these principles and applied them to still life photography, whether or not this was advertising. It seems that he treated all kind of subjects with design as the primary aspect. This matches Elspeth H. Brown's observation of a "substantial creative autonomy" in advertising photography in the 1920s.[32] Thus, photography


A New Method of Realizing the Artistic Possibilities of Photography

Experiments in Abstract Form, Made without a Camera Lens, by Man Ray, the American Painter

Fig. 3: *Vanity Fair*, November 1922, p. 30: *A New Method of Realizing the Artistic Possibilities of Photography*, rayographs by Man Ray. © Man Ray 2015 Trust/ VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2021.

regarded as both art and advertising (or rather neither solely) has been put forth by historians of photography, who criticize the limited perspective on the medium through the lens of art history. For example, Patricia Johnson states that the art-historical perspective on photography has been characterized by a distinction between autonomous and applied art: referring to Outerbridge's Ide collar as an example, she claims that the depiction of the original context has been avoided, "in an attempt to recategorize his advertising images as art."[33] In ignoring the context of advertising in the history of photography, an important function of photography would be undermined: its contribution to the staging of goods. Concerning the strategies of displaying goods, photographic composition should be regarded as an aesthetic surplus.[34] The photograph represents a real object, and, at the same time, it transforms the represented object into an image. The critic Temple Scott paraphrased this specific quality of advertising photography in 1925 as a connection of "[t]ruth and taste."[35] Relying on this observation, I want to rephrase Scott's thought by borrowing a term from the economist, journalist, and writer Alfons Paquet: I argue that the *Schauwert* [show value] of things – whether *objets trouvés*, everyday objects, or goods – is revealed by photography.[36] This show value, which addresses the viewer's "joy in beauty, curiosity, or the thirst for knowledge," makes the photograph an object of image consumption.[37] Indeed, following the theory of cultural industry, I argue that photography as an (appealing) aesthetic "good" of mass culture takes the form of a commodity itself.[38]

Displaying images for consumption

To illuminate the commodity character of photography, I want to examine other examples in *Vanity Fair*'s November 1922 issue. On page 50, four rayographs by Man Ray are presented to the readership on a single page [Fig. 3]. In comparison to other examples, a different pattern of portraying a photographer's/artist's work becomes clearly noticeable: unlike the staging of a single image, the arrangement could be described as a "hyperimage."[39] The page displays the four rayographs and a portrait of the artist, each subtly framed, with short text comments between them followed by a title and subtitle underneath. This form of arrangement exists in other *Vanity Fair* issues during the periodical's initial decades, and is used for all kinds of pictures, whether depictions of stars, cars, or men's accessories [Figs. 4a–c]. This layout deals with a number of pictures by arranging them around a central axis. In this pattern, all images, mostly photographs, are treated equally. It reminds us of displays of artifacts in books and museums, but also refers to the exhibition of goods in display windows or catalogs.[40] Regarding the page from this perspective, the images become hybrid "artifact-goods," displayed for consumption, and the layout might be understood as symptomatic of the context of (visual) consumption.



Fig. 4a: *Vanity Fair*, November 1922, p. 71: *Stars, Foreign and Domestic*, photographs by [Nickolas?] Muray and [Maurice?] Goldberg.

Of course, these examples show that the grouping of images indicates a thematic connection. Nevertheless, it is not clear at

first glance to which functional area – art, advertising, or documentary – the represented photographs should be classified. For example, with regard to the images alone, the portraits on page 71 could be considered as modern portrait studies or simply a display of a specific group of people [Fig. 4a]. This ambiguity of photography is the reason why, in "Rhetoric of the Image," Roland Barthes defines it as a "message without a code."[41] It is a form of image which is open to interpretation. However, as Outerbridge's examples have shown, the paratext accompanying the image(s) "helps [...] to choose the *correct level of perception*."[42] Thus, the linguistic framing should be described as an interpretation controlling connotation.[43]

On page 50 [Fig. 3], the correct perceptual level is indicated by the title: "A New Method of Realizing the Artistic Possibilities of Photography." Furthermore, the artistic value of the rayographs is stressed by the description of Man Ray as "the well-known American painter, living in Paris and closely allied with the modern school of French art."[44] His portrait is placed in the center of the page as a point of reference – and also like a trademark, which is symptomatic for the fact that there is no clear distinction between art and advertisement in *Vanity Fair*. Further references, like the titles of the works and the rather long quote by the French poet and critic Jean Cocteau, stress the relevance of these "Experiments in Abstract Form."[45]

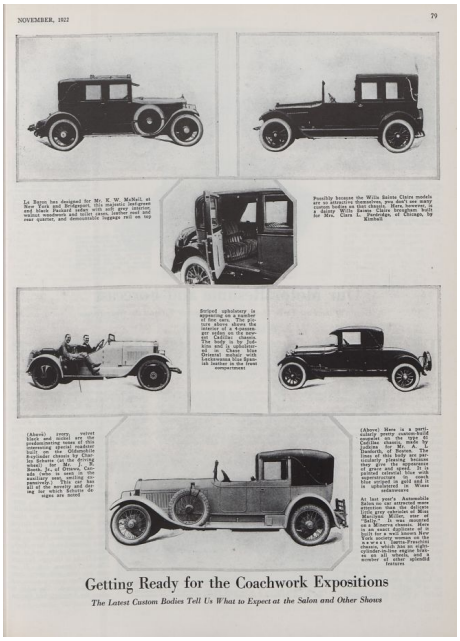


Fig. 4b: *Vanity Fair*, November 1922, p. 79: *Getting Ready for the Coachwork Exposition*, unknown photographers.

On the one hand, this makes an impression on the readers and challenges their connoisseurship. On the other hand, this system of references makes the images easier to consume by

"democratizing" knowledge: similar to a museum guide or an offstage voice, the short comments on the images sharpen the reader's awareness of relevant details. For example, the caption accompanying the upper-right-hand rayograph says: "'Imitation of the Gyroscope by the Magnifying Glass, Assisted by a Pin.' Note the contrasts of light and shade."[46] Here, the interplay of text and image gives a clear idea of what is relevant in this context. Barthes even argues that "the text *directs* the reader through the signifieds of the image, causing him to avoid some and receive others," what he calls the "*repressive* value" of the text.[47] Readers absorb the text's interpretation, and by conditioning, they learn, at best, to reproduce and apply the aesthetic judgment.

Referring to the aesthetics of home journals, the art historian Irene Nierhaus outlines the didactic arrangement of magazines. She argues that there is a normalization of specific socio-political discourses, correlating to historical period, culture, and gender, through the (re-)presentation of role models in and by a magazine's imagery. The magazine's contents know right from wrong, and this distinction is preserved and exhibited in the magazine's "display." It produces a specific lifestyle by permanently repeating motifs in variations.[48]



Fig. 4c: *Vanity Fair*, November 1922, p. 86: *Metropolitan Shopping Opportunities for Men*, unknown designers.

This view of the aesthetic and social embeddedness of magazines corresponds to Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*: he defines this as the incorporated lifestyle – an ethos – of a specific class, which structures the action and perception of members of

the class, and at the same time is structured by them. As a system of dispositions, the habitus is the reproductive factor of the class system.[49] Correlating to this and following Nierhaus, the magazine as an element of everyday visual culture is both product and stimulus for the consolidation of a specific habitus.[50] For example, in *Vanity Fair*, the combination of an image tableau of three axes with short text comments which support a superficial view of the objects and persons depicted, manifests and stimulates a consumerist attitude toward the images and their content. This display strategy typically fits the purpose of monthly magazines, in which "the new [is] the fashionable."[51]

Consuming modernity

Referring to the examples analyzed so far, it is noticeable that, in all cases, the modernity of the images and/or their depicted objects is emphasized. This might be connected to the fact that photography was by that time regarded as an expression of modernity and a medium related especially to the bourgeoisie.[52] Writing about the display and discussion of modernist culture in popular periodicals, Natalie Kalich points out that *Vanity Fair* "establish[ed] itself as the how-to guide for mastering modernism and modern culture."[53] Scholars, therefore, have related the magazine to middlebrow culture.[54] In a 1928 advertisement for the magazine itself, the self-image of an "instructor of modernity" is emphasized: "You won't always understand modernism. But you should at least be able to appreciate it. There is a way, an easy way, to know and enjoy the newest schools of modern thought and art."[55] In promising (future) readers an easy way of appreciating modernism, the advertisement humorously signifies both the complexity of modernist art and literature and the cheerfulness of consuming culture. By assuming the audience's inability to fully understand avant-garde culture, it equates to a reformulation of class differences. More importantly, the phrasing stresses the

necessity of knowing about modernism in order to have a chance of taking part in legitimate culture.[56]

According to Bourdieu, "legitimate culture" is the culture of the ruling classes, and the fine arts are an essential part of it. In *Photography: A Middle-brow Art*, a study of the social uses of photography carried out by Bourdieu in the first half of the 1960s, he points out that art sets norms for aesthetic judgment against which photography has to compete.[57] This, apparently, was a concept perpetuated decades before, as *Vanity Fair*'s judgement on photography refers to it as the basis for evaluation even in the 1920s. Whereas Man Ray's first profession as a painter seems to guarantee his status as an artist, this status is fundamentally questioned when it comes to photographic "newcomers" on the art scene. In the case of Outerbridge's still life discussed above [Fig. 2b], signal words relating to art (study, modern, abstract design, still life) point to the relevance of his photographic work. However, in the case of his colleague Margaret Watkins, the disparity between photography and art remains. It is implied in the formulation that her still lifes should be regarded as "successful attempts to impose a modernist pattern on prints made with the camera." Furthermore, the text stresses that Watkins "is, strictly speaking, an amateur." Whereas, the artistic potential of the photographs is recognized by relating their composition to Pablo Picasso and "Brancusi," her work can only be insufficient when compared to the canon.[58]

Discussing the value of photography in relation to modernist art is part of the concept of modernity.[59] In that concept, Europe, especially Paris or France more generally (and thereby bourgeois culture), are referred to as places of contemporary longing. Conjuring French culture as a model of modernity is symptomatic for *Vanity Fair* (and therefore most likely for its readers). The majority of the artists portrayed in the magazine are from France or are related to the European art world. They are only acknowledged as "proper" artists when they had been to

Paris to study, as in the case of Man Ray.[60]

In a certain sense, the desire to be part of highbrow culture is reflected in *Vanity Fair*'s recurring reference to a discourse on modern art, and to Paris or Europe as places to be. What is at stake for its readers is being the cultural avant-garde of the middle class. This theme is taken up in a humorous way in a story by Nancy Boyd in the same issue. In "Diary of an American Art Student in Paris," euphoric entries reveal the student's ambitious plans for her stay in the city.[61] For example, before her arrival, she plans to visit the Louvre every day. Quite different to that, later entries point out that she is actually busy going to cafés, chatting to like-minded people, and looking out for celebrities. Although the story is told from the first-person perspective, which allows the reader to identify with the protagonist, the exaggerated euphoria and stereotypes create distance to the art student. What is exemplary here, is that when it comes to everyday life in *Vanity Fair*, the tone changes to irony. Similar to the front cover analyzed at the beginning of this essay, the visible counterpart to such stories is provided by the numerous caricatures or humoristic drawings. In this regard, Kalich correctly points out that: "Ultimately, *Vanity Fair* successfully promoted modernism by appealing to its readers' desires to be perceived as modern, while simultaneously assuming an audience sophisticated enough to appreciate an ironic treatment of an aesthetic movement that, at times, took itself too seriously."[62]

Thus, I argue that this cheerful treatment of everyday life in relation to modernist culture is not only a didactic strategy to enable the audience's "entrée into sophisticated circles."[63] Moreover, I suggest that this distance to "real life" symptomatically correlates to the audience's "status panic."[64] This term by the social theorist Emil Lederer is reintroduced by Mills in his *White Collar* study. He points out that the white-collar worker's self-consciousness, based on unstable and ambivalent

esteem, was a primary characteristic of the emerging middle classes in the US during the 1920s.[65] Referring to Lederer, Mills states that this "status panic" was caused by the middle classes' "negative" definition, being placed in society "between independent employers and wage-workers."[66] Therefore, "aspired-to and dreamed-of features" are preferred by the middle classes for the stabilization of self-esteem.[67] The photographic depiction of these features, and, in contrast, the irony in the negotiation of everyday life in *Vanity Fair*, seems to express this state of panic.

Representation *of* versus presentation *for* the consuming class

This vision of "aspired-to and dreamed-of features" is represented in *Vanity Fair*, especially by the medium of photography. However, the modernist approach of relating photography to art and popularizing the knowledge of art does not imply education about the medium of photography, which could lead to a critical distance toward it. This lack of education supports an affirmative attitude toward photography and its commodity form.

Prominently discussed by Barthes, photographs are supposed to be images of (historic) evidence. They convey a "*having-been-there*."[68] The stabilizing, suggestive power of photographic images lies in this specific quality. The photographs in *Vanity Fair* show, and more specifically *design* a distinct worldview. Since the 1920s, Marxist approaches in art history (represented for example by Frederick Antal and Max Raphael) have pointed out the correlation between specific artistic styles and social classes. In the 1970s, Nicos Hadjinicolaou systematized this approach in his dissertation *Art History and Class Struggle* (1978). In the context of this essay, one terminological definition is especially fruitful: Hadjinicolaou suggests replacing "style"

with "visual ideology," in order to open up the formal analysis of works of art toward an analysis of class ideology.[69] The English translation of the original French term narrows its meaning: *idéologie imaginée* not only implies *visual* but also *imaginary* ideology.[70] This notion is relevant for the understanding of the worldview represented by the photographs in *Vanity Fair*. The magazine's visual ideology is aspired to and consumed by its readers. This worldview does not coincide with the real world; instead, it shows only aspects of it.

It is important to stress that *Vanity Fair* infrequently features articles on work. Furthermore, one would never find features documenting the life of a middlebrow person or the living conditions of the working class in the magazine. However, this is a deliberate decision to appeal to a certain readership looking for amusement. This underlines Mills' argument that leisure and work are strictly separated in the self-image of the middle classes. Leisure accompanies the "holiday image," which is "fed by mass-media personalities and happenings."[71] In this argument, he relies on Lowenthal's study of biographies in popular magazines. Lowenthal observed a rise of "idols of consumption" since the beginning of the 1920s.[72] They are "directly, or indirectly, related to the sphere of leisure time: [...] They seem to lead to a dream world of the masses."[73] Regarding the spread "Stars, Foreign and Domestic" [Fig. 4a], showing portraits of actors and actresses, Lowenthal's argument becomes evident once again: short comments are proof of the stars' fame, pointing out achievements and "high talent and

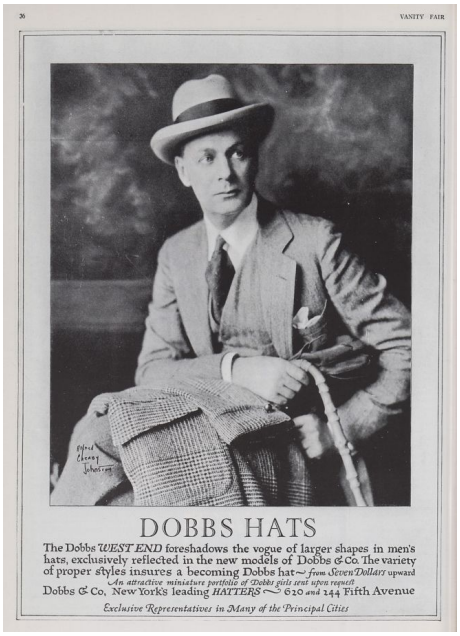


Fig. 5a: *Vanity Fair*, November 1922, p. 36: Dobbs & Co. advertisement for hats, photograph by Alfred Cheney Johnson.

magnetic personality" or "gracious presence."[74] Through the use of superlatives, "[t]he language of promotion," and portraits made by renowned photographers, the actors are stylized as heroes and become trademarks.[75] As Lowenthal writes: "The success of our heroes of consumption is in itself goods of consumption."[76]

Emphasizing the role of consumption as an integrating factor for affiliation to a social group or a way of living up to society's expectations, scholars studied images of role models in magazine advertisements in the first half of the 20th century.[77] In this context of simplified and typified portraits in advertisements, Elspeth H. Brown brings up Barthes' terminology by stressing "the *connotative* meaning" of these photographs.[78] These role models can also be found in *Vanity Fair*. For example, a Dobbs Hats advertisement reproduces a stereotype of the English gentleman with crossed legs, a tweed coat, and a walking stick, in a photograph by Alfred Cheney Johnston [Fig. 5a]. He is the counterpart to the New Woman with bobbed hair, photographed for an advertisement for a pearl necklace (or rather selling it) [Fig. 5b]. According to Lowenthal, whether celebrities or anonymous models, the stylized heroes depicted on a huge scale in the magazines are pseudoindividuals.[79] He subsequently remarks: "The pseudoindividualization of the heroes corresponds to the pseudoindividualization of the readers."[80] Instead of individualization, stereotyping is taking



Fig. 5b: *Vanity Fair*, November 1922, p. 11: Técla advertisement for necklaces, unknown photographer.

place.

The homogeneous *vision* of the present in *Vanity Fair* is condensed by images showing "representatives" of the dreamed-of reality (celebrities, artworks, consumer goods). Therefore, the magazine's "photographic cosmos" should not be regarded as *having-been-there*, according to Barthes; moreover, it turns out to be a *so-be-it* in the sense of utopian future prospects.[81]

This, finally, leads me to the assumption that one cannot speak of a *representation of* the middle or consuming class in *Vanity Fair*. Rather, *Vanity Fair*'s content is a *presentation for* consumers of culture. No actual depictions of ordinary people are present in the magazine, but items and role models of a specific lifestyle are *envisioned* – i.e. visualized and brought to mind – by the quasi-transparent medium of photography. The photographs serve as substitutes for the goods and artworks depicted, and affect viewers' "emotions, ideas and actions."[82] The images consequently become a breeding ground for the consumers' satisfaction of needs.[83] They do indeed satisfy those needs to a certain degree: the consumption of images creates a sense of belonging to the modernist avant-garde of the time.

The focus on *Vanity Fair*'s visual ideology refers to the problematic relationship between photography and objectivity.[84] In his study on the social uses of photography, Bourdieu argues that the popularity of the medium is grounded in its promise of objectivity.[85] He unmasks objectivity as a social allocation which contributes to the stabilization – or rather reproduction – of social status: "Photography is considered to be a perfectly realistic and objective recording of the visible world because (from its origin) it has been assigned social uses that are held to be 'realistic' and 'objective'."[86] Regarding the role of photography in magazines, Bourdieu makes a crucial point by highlighting the aspect of the reproduction of a canon, representing a worldview which is conventional to a specific social stratum.[87] At the same

time, he stresses the risk of confirmation "in the tautological certainty that an image of the real which is true to its representation of objectivity is really objective."[88] Following this, I argue that this misunderstanding offers a good reason why the ideology depicted through photography in *Vanity Fair* should be regarded not only as visual, but first and foremost as imaginary. Referring to Barthes, this specific quality – not to say style – of photographic representation could be described as "*real surreality*." He sees photography characterized by "spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority,"[89] or to put it in more general words, by the difference between photographic reality and the beholder's reality. These different material realities meet on the surface (or should I say interface?) of the photographic image. The real surreality of the photographic objectivity in *Vanity Fair* is the representation of the consuming class's imaginary ideology, and as such it is a presentation correlating to the emerging class's needs at the same time.

Conclusion: (image) consumption as compensatory practice

In his study on visual consumption, Schroeder emphasizes that the virtual reality of social media has become a constitutive part of our reality by showing us the range of contemporary consumption: it "involves looking, watching, spectatorship, seeing sites, gazing, window shopping, browsing, perusing, traveling, viewing, surfing the Web, navigating the Internet, and many other visual processes."[90] Apart from practices interlinked with the digital age, these modes of visual consumption were prefigured by modern magazines.[91] Finally, I want to point out one aspect that is crucial to image consumption and relevant for class relations. Regarding *Vanity Fair* as an example, I argue that *consuming* class is a compensatory practice grounded in status panic. It is a form of consumption which is not motivated

by the objective of use, but only by the sake of satisfaction.[92] It is not solely compensatory, insofar as it fills an inner void and produces a sense of belonging to a social class. Of course, middle-class women or men cannot afford the displayed goods, but at least they know about them or have seen them in the magazine. Indeed, leafing through magazines substitutes for a shopping trip, and viewing images which take the form of commodities serves as an ersatz act of consumption. Moreover, not only is the consumption of goods compensatory, but also the consumption of art: the magazine has the potential of being a surrogate for a visit to a museum or gallery. This relates to current discussion on middlebrow culture. Relying on Daniel Tracy's comparison of *Vanity Fair* and *The New Yorker*, Faye Hammill points out that: "'middlebrow' may be taken to refer to a mode of circulation, reception, and consumption of cultural products. In more affirmative terms, middlebrow culture can be understood as a space where art encounters consumerism, and pleasure combines productively with self-improvement."[93] Expanding this description, I argue that the compensatory practice of image consumption has a stabilizing effect, with consumption being a practice integrating both consumer culture and the discourse on art. Therefore this class, characterized by having no class consciousness, finds a point of orientation not in itself, but in celebrities as role models and the status of the upper class. Indeed, I argue that the construction of a class image in *Vanity Fair* cannot be limited to advertising photography, but is created by the juxtaposition of advertising photography, art photography, and celebrities.

Borrowing Hadjinicolaou's terminology, *Vanity Fair*'s imagery could be described mostly as a positive visual ideology which might be understood as an affirmation of the dominant visual ideology.[94] Nevertheless, the appropriation of legitimate culture by consuming this culture through substitutive images could be regarded as a symbolic class struggle between the upper and

middle classes. On the one hand, the usage of photography helped to establish a popular discourse on (previously) upper-class culture. On the other hand, the medium of photography itself was elevated to a cultural norm. This attempt to establish new cultural norms has been successfully perpetuated since then. In identifying with the introduced artists, the consuming class appears as the cultural avant-garde of the middle classes. In contrast to this, the aspect of reproduction is directly linked to photography. It is not only objects and images which are reproduced and circulated; moreover, in affirmatively displaying legitimate culture, social relations are also reproduced; *Vanity Fair* is an instrument of reproduction. In this regard, and in contrast to the high standards of living embodied by the precious goods and role models represented in photographs throughout the magazine, the cover image of *Vanity Fair*'s November 1922 issue is a "strong message," as Barthes would put it.[95] *Vanity Fair* readers, identifying with the man in the bottom-left corner, see themselves peeping through opera glasses in order to spy on the upper class. Relying on Mills, the social constellation on the cover can be regarded as a symptom of the period: "by the 1920s in America a democracy of status vision had come about; the area of prestige was truly national; now the bottom could see the top—at least that version of it that was put on display. […] For those on the bottom, the top presented was real and it was dazzling."[96] Nevertheless, there is a crucial difference between the *Vanity Fair* reader and the man in the drawing: the magazine allows the reader to be at eye level with high society.

1 While this was the artist's full name, the magazine most commonly (and indeed in this issue's table of contents) credited him as "George H. Clisbee."

2 Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 99f.

3 Jonathan E. Schroeder wrote an entire study on visual consumption. But writing particularly from an economic perspective, his definition lacks the social aspect I am interested in. He writes: "By visual consumption, I mean not just visual-oriented consumer behavior such as watching videos, tourism, or window-shopping, but also a theoretical approach to the interstices of consumption, vision, and culture, including how visual images are handled by consumer research. Visual consumption is a key attribute of an experience economy organized around attention. We live in a digital electronic world, based on images designed to capture eyeballs and build brand names, create mindshare and design successful products and services." Jonathan E. Schroeder, *Visual Consumption* (London: Routledge, 2005), 3. Furthermore, his study focuses on contemporary consumer culture, against the backdrop of the virtual space of the internet.

4 In 2012, the McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) prominently reported a "rise of the consuming class," connecting this tendency to the world's urbanization as well as to a shift of the global economic balance in the east and south. The report gives a brief economic definition of "consuming class" and an idea of the class's model: the "skilled worker." Richard Dobbs et al., *Urban World: Cities and the Rise of the Consuming Class*, ed. McKinsey Global Institute (New York: McKinsey & Company, 2012), esp. 1. Additionally, a number of field studies from different disciplines or research institutes opened up the category, for instance, to neoliberalism, popular or youth culture, private consumption, and the millennial generation: Mary Rizzo, "Consuming Class, Buying Identity: Middle-Class Youth Culture, Working-Class Style and Consumer Culture, 1945–2000" (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 2005); C.f. e.g. Peter S. Cahn, "Consuming Class: Multilevel Marketers in Neoliberal Mexico," *Cultural Anthropology* vol. 23, no. 3 (2008), 429–452; Raúl Rubio, "Consuming Class: Identity and Power through the Commodification of Bourgeois Culture, Celebrity, and Glamour," in: *Living with Class: Philosophical Reflections on Identity and Material Culture*, eds. Ron Scapp and Brian Seitz (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 159–167; "Understanding China's New Consuming Class – the Millennials (Chinese Consumers Series, Issue 1)," Fung Business Intelligence, last modified 2017,

http://www.iberchina.org/files/2017/millenials_china_fung.pdf; Alisa Wingfield, "Perspectives: Who Exactly Is Africa's Consuming Class?," September 19, 2017, https://www.nielsen.com/sk/sk/insights/article/2017/perspectives-who-exactly-is-africas-consuming-class/; Michelle F. Weinberger, Jane R. Zavisca, and Jennifer M. Silva, "Consuming for an Imagined Future: Middle-Class Consumer Lifestyle and Exploratory Experiences in the Transition to Adulthood," *Journal of Consumer Research* vol. 44, no. 2 (2017), 332–360. Whereas the sum of these studies gives an idea of the characteristics of the consuming class nowadays, a general sociological definition or description is still missing.

5 Siegfried Kracauer, *The Salaried Masses: Duty and Distraction in Weimar Germany*, trans. Quintin Hoare (London: Verso, 1998).

6 Cf. C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), 235ff.

7 Neva R. Goodwin, *The Consumer Society* (Washington: Island Press, 1997).

8 To name but a few: Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976); Stuart Ewen and Elizabeth Ewen, *Channels of Desire: Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciousness* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982); Simon J. Bronner, *Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods in America, 1880–1920* (New York et al.: Norton, 1989); Grant David McCracken, *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); William R. Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993); Arthur Asa Berger, *Ads, Fads, and Consumer Culture: Advertising's Impact on American Character and Society* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000); Gudrun M. König, *Konsumkultur: Inszenierte Warenwelt um 1900* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2009).

9 Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920–1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Michele H. Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Patricia A. Johnston, *Real Fantasies: Edward Steichen's Advertising Photography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Schroeder, *Visual Consumption*; Elspeth H. Brown, *The Corporate Eye: Photography and the Rationalization of American Commercial Culture, 1884–1929* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); Paul Frosh, *The Image Factory: Consumer Culture, Photography and the Visual Content Industry* (Oxford: Berg, 2003),

Wolfgang Kaschuba, "Dinge in Bewegung. Über Bildkonsum," in: *Modernisierung des Sehens: Sehweisen zwischen Künsten und Medien*, eds. Matthias Bruhn and Kai-Uwe Hemken (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2008), 55–65.

10 Schroeder, *Visual Consumption*, 68. However, the author has a narrowed perspective on the medium, defining it as "information technology" in the same place.

11 Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, xviii.

12 Warburg cited in: Horst Bredekamp, "A Neglected Tradition? Art History as Bildwissenschaft," *Critical Inquiry* vol. 29, no. 3 (Spring 2003), 423.

13 Veblen influenced Bourdieu's view of taste as being socially and economically determined, as well as his concept of symbolic capital.

14 Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study in the Evolution of Institutions* (New York et al.: Macmillan, 1899). Veblen gives the term a separate chapter in his book, see: 33–47.

15 Ibid., 19; for the concept of "conspicuous leisure," see: 18–32.

16 Ibid., 34ff.

17 Ibid., 35.

18 Cf. Caroline Seebohm, *The Man Who Was Vogue: The Life and Times of Condé Nast* (New York: Viking Press, 1982), 106; Ben Yagoda, *About Town: The New Yorker and the World It Made* (New York: Scribner, 2000), 36.

19 Cf. e.g. the table of contents of the November 1922 issue (37). The rubrics' names changed over time, but, altogether, the magazine's content always covered topics relating to the different areas named above. On the primacy of entertainment, see: John W. Tebbel and Mary Ellen Zuckerman, *The Magazine in America, 1741–1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 88.

20 N. N. [Frank Crowninshield], "In Vanity Fair," *Vanity Fair* vol. 1, no. 5 (1914), 13. Emphasis in the original.

21 The great importance of this development becomes clear in the early histories of photography, written in the 1930s. Similar to Lucia Moholy, Robert Taft, author of the history of American photography at the time, ends his book with a chapter on "Photography and the Pictorial Press," in which he names one invention after another and points out how photography replaced former printing techniques. In 1897, half-tone illustration was "a regular feature of American newspaper journalism." Cf. Robert

Taft, *Photography and the American Scene: Social History, 1839–1889* (New York: Dover, 1938), 419–450: 446.

22 Cf. e.g. Tebbel and Zuckerman, *The Magazine in America*, 229. However, I think the author's view on the role of photography in magazines after the First World War is outdated. Especially regarding *Vanity Fair*, one could hardly speak of photographs "enhanc[ing] text matter" (ibid.). The size of the photographs and the space devoted to photography call for different argumentation, which I try to develop in this essay.

23 Elspeth H. Brown demonstrates that the growth of magazine circulation in the 1890s involved more advertising and drove the discourse on photography in advertising. Cf. Brown, *The Corporate Eye*, 160–162, 172, 185.

24 Aby Warburg's term "*Bilderfahrzeuge*" has become the title of an international research group. It implies the range of objects examined in their research: "vehicles" full of images, or images functioning as vehicles, cf. the Introduction in: Andreas Beyer et al., *Bilderfahrzeuge: Aby Warburgs Vermächtnis Und Die Zukunft Der Ikonologie* (Berlin: Verlag Klaus Wagenbach, 2018); a recent exhibition catalog documents exemplary research on *LIFE* magazine as such a medium: *LIFE Magazine and the Power of Photography*, exh. cat., eds. Katherine A. Bussard and Kristen Gresh, Princeton University Art Museum, February 22 – June 21, 2020 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020).

25 For example, this becomes evident regarding the first issue of *Dress & Vanity Fair*. It is the only issue of the journal with a photograph on the cover – which could be understood, retrospectively, as programmatic positioning. Furthermore, the medium is a topic of the first editorial, e.g. when it promised "to make as complete a photographic record of these [sports] events as space and the camera will afford." N. N., "In Vanity Fair," 15.

26 However, photography was newly introduced to advertising at that time; cf. Elspeth H. Brown, "Rationalizing Consumption: Lejaren à Hiller and the Origins of American Advertising Photography, 1913–1924," in: *Cultures of Commerce: Representation and American Business Culture. 1877–1960*, eds. Elspeth H. Brown, Catherine Gudis, and Marina Moskowitz (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 75–90; and the chapter with a similar title ("Rationalizing Consumption: Photography and Commercial Illustration") in her broad study *The Corporate Eye*, 119–216.

27 A spread introducing "The Sculpture of Aristide Maillol" (46/47) is a rare exception.

28 Patricia Johnston, "Art and Commerce: The Challenge of Modernist Advertising Photography," in: *Cultures of Commerce*, op. cit., 95.

29 Although there is one more pattern of composition comparable to the advertising photograph: the bowl's rim, extended by the arrangement of the two eggs in the foreground, could also be recognized as the form of the logarithmic spiral.

30 The school was founded by the Pictorialist Clarence H. White (1871–1925) in 1914. In the 1920s, it was located in the Art Center, New York, next to the Pictorial Photographers of America and the Art Directors Club, among others. The neighborhood of these organizations, White's personal connections to *Vanity Fair*'s editorial board, and the school's evening lectures on photography as a profession – given by professionals – opened up various possibilities of cooperation to the students. Thanks to that network and to numerous still life studies encouraged by White and modern painter Max Weber (1881–1961, who taught art history and composition at the school), some students became successful still life and advertising photographers. Moreover, they contributed to the introduction of still life and modernist patterns to the field of advertising. For further reading on the school, cf. esp. Bonnie Yochelson's contribution to the first exhibition catalog, published about the White School: "Clarence H. White, Peaceful Warrior," in: *Pictorialism into Modernism: The Clarence H. White School of Photography*, exh. cat., ed. Marianne Fulton, Detroit Institute of Arts et al., March 23 – May 26, 1996 (New York: Rizzoli, 1996), 10–119; *Clarence H. White and His World: The Art & Craft of Photography, 1895–1925*, exh. cat., ed. Anne McCauley, Princeton University Art Museum, October 7, 2017 – January 7, 2018 (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2017); for Steichen, cf. Johnston, *Real Fantasies*.

31 Margaret Watkins, "Advertising and Photography," in: *Pictorial Photography in America* , vol. 4 (New York: The Art Center, 1926), 53.

32 With that, she relies on a statement by the photographer Anton Bruehl. Cf. Brown, *The Corporate Eye*, 205.

33 Johnston, "Art and Commerce," 95.

34 This is what Gudrun M. König stated for displaying goods; however, she does not consider photography. König, *Konsumkultur*.

35 Temple Scott, "The Use of Photography in Advertising," *Bulletin of the Art Center* vol. 3, no. 7 (March 1925), 172–176.

36 Cf. Alfons Paquet, *Das Ausstellungsproblem in Der Volkswirtschaft* (Jena: Fischer, 1908), 6–16.

37 Original in German: "Die subjektive Ursache [...] der Entstehung des Schauwertes kann in der bloßen Schönheitsfreude, Schaulust oder Wißbegier der Menschen liegen." Ibid., 7.

38 For the theory of cultural industry, see the relevant chapter in: Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 94–136; for the context of images or design in general see esp. the explanation about art: 127ff.

39 Felix Thürlemann, *More than One Picture: An Art History of the Hyperimage*, trans. Elizabeth Tucker (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2019).

40 Cf. e.g. the Sears catalog in the 1920s and the chapter on catalogs in Matthias Bruhn, *Bildwirtschaft. Verwaltung und Verwertung der Sichtbarkeit* (Weimar: VDG, 2003), 137–185.

41 Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," in: *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 43.

42 Ibid., 39. Emphasis in the original.

43 Ibid., 39f.

44 N. N., "A New Method of Realizing the Artistic Possibilities of Photography," *Vanity Fair* vol. 19, no. 3 (1922), 30.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," 40. Emphasis in the original.

48 Irene Nierhaus, "Seiten des Wohnens – Wohnzeitschriften und ihr Medialer und Gesellschaftspolitischer Display," *FKW // Zeitschrift Für Geschlechterforschung Und Visuelle Kultur*, no. 64 (Seitenweise Wohnen: Mediale Einschreibungen 2018), 18–28; concerning her variable medial and social definition of "di/s/p/lay," cf. 24–27.

49 Cf. Pierre Bourdieu et al., *Photography: A Middle-brow Art*, trans. Shaun Whiteside (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1990), 5; and more detailed, Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 169–225; for the definition of habitus as "structured structure" and "structuring structure," see Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 72; note that Bourdieu developed

his concept of habitus in reference to the art historian Erwin Panofsky: Pierre Bourdieu, "Postface," in: *Architecture Gothique et Pensée Scolastique: Précédé de l'abbé Suger de Saint-Denis. Trad. et Postface de Pierre Bourdieu*, ed. Erwin Panofsky (Paris: Éd. de Minuit, 1967), 132–168.

50 Bourdieu quite frequently refers to magazines as examples for his theoretical arguments, cf. e.g. Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 21, 77, 153, 232.

51 Cf. Faye Hammill, "The New Yorker, the Middlebrow, and the Periodical Marketplace in 1925," in: *Writing for the New Yorker: Critical Essays on an American Periodical*, ed. Fiona Green (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 17–35: 21.

52 This connection was prominently pointed out by Gisèle Freund in her 1936 dissertation on the role of photography in 19th-century French society. Cf. the English translation of her 1974 book: Gisèle Freund, *Photography and Society* (Boston: David R. Gondine, 1979); Regarding advertisements, Marchand demonstrates that "ad creators of that era [the 1920s and 1930s] proudly proclaimed themselves missionaries of modernity." Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, xxi; cf. also the first chapter of the book (1–24).

53 Natalie Kalich, "'How Fatally Outmoded Is Your Point of View?' *Vanity Fair*'s Articulation of Modernist Culture to the Modern Reader," *Reception: Texts, Readers, Audiences, History* vol. 6, no. 1 (2014), 20; for further reading, cf. her dissertation: Natalie Kalich, "Modernism En Vogue: Popular Periodicals and Their Engagement with Modernist Culture" (PhD diss., Loyola University Chicago, 2012).

54 This classification was made in relation to the weekly *The New Yorker*, which was first published in 1925. Cf. e.g. Daniel Tracy, "Investing in 'Modernism': Smart Magazines, Parody, and Middlebrow Professional Judgement," *The Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* vol. 1, no. 1 (2010), 38–63; Hammill, "The New Yorker"; research in middlebrow culture was established in particular by literature studies, cf. especially Joan Shelley Rubin, *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

55 Advertisement for *Vanity Fair*, 1928, cited in Kalich, "'How Fatally Outmoded Is Your Point of View?'," 20.

56 Cf. ibid., 20f.; however, this is similar to what Bourdieu characterizes as the petite bourgeois relation to legitimate culture: "the considerable gap between knowledge and recognition." This implies the danger of "cultural allodoxia," which is "engendered by [...] undifferentiated reverence, in which avidity combines with anxiety." Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 319–323.

57 Cf. on the social function of the hierarchy of the arts and the strategies of legitimation connected to it: Bourdieu et al., *Photography: A Middle-brow Art*, 95–98.

58 N. N., "Photography Comes into the Kitchen," *Vanity Fair* vol. 17, no. 2 (1921), 60; Calling Watkins an amateur might correspond to a gender stereotype of the period; however, this statement is also an expression of a reputation that White and his school, but also "artistic photography" in general, had – namely, to begin photographic practice as amateurs, cf. Anne McCauley, "Amateur Photography and the Poetry of the Everyday," in: *Clarence H. White and His World*, op. cit., 19–87; Interestingly, Bourdieu later reveals this ambiguous attitude toward photography as being typical of (higher) clerks: "while photography may be seen as an art, it is only ever a minor art." Bourdieu et al., *Photography: A Middle-brow Art*, 65.

59 This discourse, which gathered momentum in the first decades of the 20th century, actually dates back to the invention of photography, cf. Lucia Moholy's (cultural) history of photography: *A Hundred Years of Photography: 1839–1939* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1939); and the anthology *First Exposures: Writings from the Beginning of Photography*, ed. Steffen Siegel (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2017).

60 Moreover, the periodical boasts of being a platform for "Distinguished Modern Contributors," with quite a few coming from Europe. In the November 1922 issue, for example, the Hungarian writer and Dadaist Tristan Tzara is represented with an article on "News of the Seven Arts in Europe." Advertisement for *Vanity Fair*, 1928, cited in Kalich, "'How Fatally Outmoded Is Your Point of View?'," 19f.

61 Nancy Boyd, "Diary of an American Art-Student in Paris," *Vanity Fair* vol. 19, no. 3 (1922), 44.

62 Kalich, "'How Fatally Outmoded Is Your Point of View?'," 21.

63 Ibid., 22.

64 Illuminating the perspective of *Vanity Fair*'s editors and writers, Daniel Tracy suggests, similarly to my argument: "Indeed, parody transforms their anxiety over legitimate form into the confidence of sophistication, the critical ease of the smart professional. Parody

becomes a professional skill [...]," Tracy, "Investing in 'Modernism'," 44.

65 Cf. Mills, *White Collar*, 240.

66 Ibid., 241f. "Status Panic" is the title of the corresponding chapter (239–258). On this point, again, Mills' outline is very similar to what Kracauer calls "spiritual homelessness."

67 Ibid., 237; this matches Marchand's analysis of American advertisements of the 1920s and 1930s. He states that: "advertisers evidently concluded that American consumers hungered for an authentic, certified social aristocracy against which they might measure their own gains in status." Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, 194.

68 Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," 44. Emphasis in the original.

69 "Visual ideology is the way in which the formal and thematic elements of a picture are combined on each specific occasion. This combination is a particular form of the overall ideology of a social class." Nicos Hadjinicolaou, "Art History and Class Struggle," in: *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Francis Frascina and Charles Harrison (New York: Routledge, 1982), 244.

70 This definition can be specified by the later definition of ideology by T. J. Clark. He uses: "the word to indicate the existence in society of distinct and singular bodies of knowledge: orders of knowing, most often imposed on quite disparate bits and pieces of representation. The sign of an ideology is a kind of inertness in discourse: a fixed pattern of imagery and belief, a syntax which seems obligatory, a set of permitted modes of seeing and saying, each with its own structure of closure and disclosure, its own horizons, its way of providing certain perceptions and rendering others unthinkable, aberrant, or extreme." T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), 8.

71 Mills, *White Collar*, 237.

72 Leo Lowenthal, "The Triumph of Mass Idols [1944]," in: idem, *Literature and Mass Culture: Communication in Society* (London: Routledge, 1984), 216.

73 Ibid., 216f.

74 N. N., "Stars, Foreign and Domestic," *Vanity Fair* vol. 19, no. 3 (1922), 71.

75 Cf. Lowenthal, "The Triumph of Mass Idols," 219, 226, quote: 232.

76 Ibid., 228.

77 Tom Pendergast, *Creating the Modern Man: American Magazines and Consumer Culture, 1900*

–1950 (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000); Cf. regarding the framing of societal assumptions by advertising, Marchant, *Advertising the American Dream*, xviii–xx, 165–167; and on the role of the aesthetic strategy of abstraction see: Brown, *The Corporate Eye*, 170.

78 Brown, *The Corporate Eye*, 171.

79 Lowenthal, "The Triumph of Mass Idols," 233.

80 Ibid., 234.

81 Thomas Cohnen, *Fotografischer Kosmos. Der Beitrag eines Mediums zur Visuellen Ordnung der Welt* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2008).

82 Horst Bredekamp, *Image Acts: A Systematic Approach to Visual Agency*, trans. Elizabeth Clegg (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 20; for "substitutive image acts," see: 137–192.

83 Relying on examples of early advertising photography, Brown explains this with the aesthetic strategy of a "complex mixture of realism and idealism." Brown, *The Corporate Eye*, 208; Michael Schudson called this "Capitalist Realism," cf. Michael Schudson, *Advertising, the Uneasy Persuasion: Its Dubious Impact on American Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 214–218.

84 Gisèle Freund also regarded this supposed realism as the motive for the mass consumption of photography. Cf. Freund, *Photography and Society*, 52–68, 83–94.

85 Bourdieu et al., *Photography: A Middle-brow Art*, 5ff.

86 Ibid., 74. Emphasis in the original.

87 Cf. ibid., 75.

88 Ibid., 76.

89 Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," 44; combining the theories by Bourdieu and Barthes is suggested by Peter Geimer, *Theorien Der Fotografie Zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius, 2009), 79–89.

90 Schroeder, *Visual Consumption*, 3.

91 The (social) role of photographic images at the interface of material and virtual reality is currently discussed in visual culture studies, especially in studies devoted to Instagram, cf. especially Tama Leaver, Tim Highfield, and Crystal Abidin, *Instagram: Visual Social Media Cultures* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2020). But differently to

magazines, social media users participate in the realization of (re-)presentations by producing ideal images themselves. The visual/imaginary ideology of social media and especially of Instagram is a virtual reality created to a large extent by its users.

92 Cf. Elmar Lange, "Kompensatorischer Konsum und Kaufsucht," in: *Jugendkonsum im Wandel: Konsummuster, Freizeitverhalten, Lebensstile und Kaufsucht 1990 und 1996*, ed. Elmar Lange (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 1997), 137f.

93 Hammill, "The New Yorker," 18.

94 Hadjinicolaou, "Art History and Class Struggle," 248.

95 Thereby, Barthes points to his argument that "there is no drawing without style" – that is, without connotation. Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," 43.

96 Mills, *White Collar*, 254.

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