

THEORETICAL MONOGRAPH

Zero-Horizon Photographic Art Theory

The Zero-Horizon and the Structure of Photographic Formation

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CONTENTS

Prologue — The Zero-Horizon	1
Introduction — Toward the Conditions of Photographic Formation	2
1. Where the Question of Photographic Theory Is Placed	2
2. The Four Phases of Zero-Horizon as a Theoretical Model	3
3. External References in the Formative History	3
4. Phenomenology as a Comparative Coordinate	4
5. Comparative Coordinates in Theories of Photography	4
6. Scope of the Theory	4
Chapter One — The Four Phases of Zero-Horizon	6
I. Proto-zero	7
II. Zero-tremor	9
III. Zero-response	11
IV. Zero-return	12
V. The Relational Structure of the Four Phases	14
VI. From the Deep Four Phases to the Outer-Layer Structure	16
Chapter Two — The Outer-Layer Structure of Zero-Horizon	17
I. The Theoretical Position of the Outer Layer	17
II. The Logical Structure of the Three Outer-Layer Aspects	18
III. Primary Structural Aspects	19
IV. Composite Structural Aspects	20
V. Structural Time-Aspects	21
VI. The Three Aspects as a Multidimensional Description of One Outer-Layer Process	23
VII. Relation to the Deep Four Phases	24
VIII. Relation to Photography	24
IX. The Epistemological Position of the Outer-Layer Structure	25
X. Explanatory Scope of the Outer-Layer Structure	26
Chapter Three — Proto-Qualia	28
I. Why Introduce the Concept?	28
II. Distinction from Qualia	29
III. Structural Threshold	29
IV. Proto-Qualia as a Structural Condition	30
V. Subject-Independence at the Level of Formative Conditions	30
VI. Relation to the Subject Side	31
VII. Epistemological Position and Circularity	31
VIII. Boundaries with Adjacent Concepts	32
IX. Boundary with Phenomenology	33
X. Relation to Photographic Formation	33
XI. Explanatory Scope and Transition to the Next Chapter	34
Chapter Four — Subject-Side Internal Modulation	35
I. External Influence and Subject-Side Change	36
II. What Internal Modulation Includes	36
III. Relation to Proto-Qualia	37
IV. Pre-reflective Response and Conscious Articulation	37
V. The Comparative Coordinate Provided by Autopoiesis	38
VI. Comparison with Structural Determinacy and Its Limits	39
VII. Conditions for Identifying Internal Modulation	39
VIII. Internal Modulation and Photographic Action	40

IX. Explanatory Scope and Transition to the Next Chapter	40
Chapter Five — The Camera and the One-Time Relational Event of Photographing	42
I. Asking about Photographic Formation Itself.....	42
II. Structure of the One-Time Relational Event of Photographing	43
III. The Position of the Camera.....	44
IV. World-Side Conditions and a Finitely Delimited Configuration	44
V. Trace and Indexicality	45
VI. One-Time Character and Numerical Non-Identity.....	45
VII. One Act of Photographing and Multiple Results.....	46
VIII. Pastness and the Photographing Event	47
IX. Separation from Recording, Evidence, and Social Use.....	47
X. Temporal Distribution of Subject Involvement.....	48
XI. Definition of the Photographic Trace.....	48
XII. Explanatory Scope and Transition to the Next Chapter.....	49
Chapter Six — The Photographic Work and the Viewer	50
I. The Photograph Exists before the Viewer	50
II. Sensation May Precede Meaning Formation	50
III. Conditions of the Work and Viewer-Side Emotion.....	51
IV. The Individuality of the Viewer in the Viewing Event.....	51
V. Comparison with Barthes's Punctum.....	52
VI. Body, Attention, and Memory.....	52
VII. The Form of Realization of the Work and Conditions of Presentation	53
VIII. Authorial Intention and the Viewer	53
IX. Proto-Qualia and the Viewing Event	54
X. The One-Time Character of the Viewing Event.....	54
XI. Explanatory Scope and Transition to the Next Chapter.....	55
Chapter Seven — The Scope of Zero-Horizon Photographic Art Theory.....	56
I. Understanding Photography through the Generative Process	56
II. The Position of the Author in Photographic Art.....	57
III. Comparison with Marginal Art	57
IV. Photography and Generated Images	58
V. Hybridization of Photography and Generated Images.....	58
VI. Origin of the Trace and the Truth of the Image.....	59
VII. The Scope of Generative Aesthetics.....	60
VIII. Explanatory Scope of the Theory.....	60
IX. Unresolved Questions	61
X. Conclusion of Chapter Seven.....	61
Relational Supplement — Zero-Horizon Photographic Art Theory and Shadō	63
I. Different Questions Arising from the Same Practice	63
II. The Positions of a Theoretical System and a Practical System	64
III. Shadō as an Independent System.....	64
IV. Proto-Qualia and the Positions of the Two Systems	65
V. Where the Two Systems Coexist	65
VI. Lexical Proximity and Conceptual Position.....	65
VII. Boundary between Structural Confirmation, Authorial Positioning, and Shadō.....	66
VIII. Formative History and Theoretical Validity	66
IX. Boundary Relation between the Two Systems.....	67
Theoretical Supplement — Redescription of the Zero-Horizon Outer-Layer Structure	68
I. Subordinate Modes of the Primary Structural Aspects.....	68
II. Subordinate Modes of the Composite Structural Aspects	69
III. Subordinate Modes of the Structural Time-Aspects	70

IV. Overlap among the Three Structural Aspects and Descriptive Resolution	70
V. World-Side Description and Confirmation of Already-Formed Photographs	71
VI. Boundary with Proto-Qualia.....	72
VII. Boundary with the Operational Part.....	72
VIII. Scope of This Supplement	72
Comparative Supplement — Quantum Imagination and “Before Formation”	74
I. Contact in Formative History.....	74
II. Adjacent Questions, Different Objects	75
III. Possibility, Relation, and Formation as Comparative Vocabulary	75
IV. Observation and Photographic Action	76
V. Boundaries of Interference, Collapse, and Decoherence.....	77
VI. The Limited Meaning of “Quantum Imagination”	77
VII. Boundary with Generated Images.....	78
VIII. Scope of the Comparison	78
Verification Supplement — Questions Zero-Horizon Photographic Art Theory Takes On	80
I. Why Four Phases?	80
II. Does “World-Side” Presuppose an Invisible Entity?	83
III. Is Proto-Qualia an Unnecessary Third Term?	83
IV. Is the “One-Time Character” of Photography Trivial?	84
V. Under What Conditions Would Zero-Horizon Require Reconsideration?	85
VI. The Position of This Supplement	86
Operational Part — Zero-Horizon Artwork-Phase Protocol.....	88
I. Scope of the Operational Part	88
II. Basic Vocabulary of Structural Confirmation.....	89
III. Confirmation Proceeds Recursively	90
IV. Structural Confirmation and Authorial Positioning	90
V. Artwork-Phase Position and Core Artwork-Phase Groups.....	91
VI. Threshold — Artwork-Transversal Axis	91
VII. Return to ZERO — Return and Restart.....	92
VIII. Functional Categories of Names within the Artwork System	92
IX. Changes of Phase Position and History	93
X. Official Authorial Positioning and Third-Party Reading.....	93
XI. Operational Boundaries.....	94
XII. Endpoint of the Operational Part	95
Final Chapter — The Horizon of Photographic Formation.....	96
I. Contribution as a Theory of Formation.....	96
II. The One-Time Relational Event of Photographing and the Photographic Trace	97
III. Relations Opened after Formation	97
IV. Scope and Boundaries of the Theory	98
V. Limits of the Theory.....	99
VI. Questions That Remain.....	100
VII. Returning to the Zero-Horizon.....	100
Epilogue — The Faint Contour of Zero-return	102
Notes	103
Bibliography.....	105
A. Theory Formation and Theoretical References.....	105
B. Comparative and Conceptual-Boundary References	105
C. Contemporary Photography and Image-Environment References	105

Glossary.....	107
A. Core Theoretical Terms	107
B. Operational and Artwork-System Terms.....	109
C. Relational and Comparative Terms	110

About This Sample

An Excerpt from the Complete Edition

This PDF is a preview sample of *Zero-Horizon Photographic Art Theory: The Zero-Horizon and the Structure of Photographic Formation*, English Edition / Version 1.0, which presents selected chapters of the work.

The present sample consists of the cover, the Contents, the Prologue, the Introduction, Chapter One (“The Four Phases of Zero-Horizon”), the Epilogue, the Notes, the Bibliography, and the colophon.

The page numbers on the text pages are identical to those of the complete edition. The Contents lists all entries to show the structure of the whole work; entries for parts not included in this sample carry no links.

When quoting or referring to this work, the complete edition should be cited as the source.

Prologue — The Zero-Horizon

A Theoretical Position for Asking What Precedes Photographic Formation

When photography is discussed, an image is usually already there. Zero-Horizon Photographic Art Theory traces the question further back, prior to the interpretations and evaluations opened by the formed image, toward the conditions through which that image comes to be formed.

The question posed here is how differences on the world side that participate in photographic formation can be described as a generative structure before the post-formation distinctions of image, author, object, meaning, and viewer are introduced.

The word *before* in this study does not indicate precedence in clock time. It indicates theoretical priority. The concern is not with measuring the seconds before exposure or the milliseconds before perceptual processing, but with the structural order in which photographic theory begins to presuppose the distinctions it uses in explanation.

This theoretical position is the **Zero-Horizon**.

Zero-Horizon Photographic Art Theory and the Japanese title *Reishiki Shashin Geijutsu-ron* (零式写真芸術論) designate the same theoretical system. *Zero-Horizon* corresponds to the theoretical base point named 零の地平 in Japanese. The Japanese abbreviation 零式 refers to the theoretical system developed from that base point; it is not a literal translation of *Zero-Horizon*.

At the Zero-Horizon, differences on the world side are first described as generation on the world side rather than being immediately reduced to object, meaning, representation, or emotion. The argument then proceeds to the world-side outer-layer structure, subject-side internal modulation, the one-time relational event of photographing that includes the camera, the formed photograph, and the viewing event.

Photographic formation is not reduced to a single cause. Deep-layer generation on the world side, the outer-layer structure, changes on the subject side, and the operation of the camera are treated as mutually distinguishable explanatory domains.

The first question of this study can therefore be stated as follows:

Before a photograph is formed, what kind of generative structure can describe difference on the world side?

The second question asks how that world-side structure participates in the event of photographing together with the subject, the camera, and a temporal cut.

The Zero-Horizon is the theoretical point of departure that connects these two questions.

Introduction — Toward the Conditions of Photographic Formation

Method, Comparative Coordinates, and Scope of Zero-Horizon Photographic Art Theory

Zero-Horizon Photographic Art Theory describes the formation of photographic art by tracing inquiry beyond the analysis of completed images and meanings toward the conditions of their formation.

Its formative history includes long-term photographic practice as well as comparative encounters with theories of photography, aesthetics, phenomenology, autopoiesis, quantum theory, and Marginal Art. A reference that contributes to conceptual formation, however, is not identical with an argument that supports a completed theoretical proposition.

References in the formative history help explain why particular questions emerged and why the theory moved toward particular conceptual distinctions. The theoretical body, by contrast, examines propositions through conceptual coherence, explanatory necessity, comparison with existing theories, range of application, and explicit limits. This study connects those two dimensions only after keeping them distinct.

1. Where the Question of Photographic Theory Is Placed

Photographic theory has many legitimate points of departure. Authorial intention, indexical relation to the object, the camera as apparatus, documentary character, reproducibility, social institutions, memory, and viewer experience all provide important coordinates for thinking about photography.

What Zero-Horizon distinguishes is not their relative value but the position from which the question is asked. When the relation between image and object is discussed, the photographic image has already been formed. When authorial expression is discussed, the distinctions among author, object, selection, and image are already in place. The same is true of viewer experience: a photograph already exists as an object of viewing.

Zero-Horizon adds to these post-formation inquiries a theory of formation that asks about the conditions through which the photograph comes to be formed. Its first object of description is **deep-layer generation on the world side**.

2. The Four Phases of Zero-Horizon as a Theoretical Model

Deep-layer generation on the world side is articulated through four phases: **Proto-zero, Zero-tremor, Zero-response, and Zero-return**. The four phases describe distinct functions of equilibrium, deviation, the formation of relations, and re-equilibration.

They are neither units of measurement in the natural sciences, psychological classifications of the photographer, nor categories for classifying formed works. They are an analytical model within a theory of photographic art for describing world-side generation prior to photographic formation through functional differences.

For the four-phase model to hold theoretically, each phase must perform a distinct explanatory function, the relations among them must be described coherently, and their responsibilities must remain differentiated from those of the outer-layer structure, subject-side internal modulation, and the theory of photographic formation that follow. Chapter One establishes these conditions through definitions of the four phases and their mutual relations.

3. External References in the Formative History

Shunsuke Tsurumi's theory of **Marginal Art** provides a comparative coordinate in the formative history of this study by returning inquiry toward the conditions under which art institutions become established.¹ Marginal Art, which addresses the margins and conditions of institutionalized art, and Zero-Horizon, which addresses world-side structure prior to photographic formation, concern different domains. Their relation is limited to a shared problem-setting gesture: tracing inquiry backward from an already established framework toward its conditions.

Autopoietic theory provides another important comparative coordinate for distinguishing external influence from internal change.² In this study, neither the photographing subject nor the act of seeing as a whole is identified with a biological system. Autopoiesis is referred to in a limited way in Chapter Four, where subject-side internal modulation is examined.

Quantum theory entered the formative history as a source of comparative thinking around possibility, relation, formation, and observation.³ No one-to-one correspondence between quantum phenomena and the four phases of Zero-Horizon constitutes a scientific foundation for the theory. The Comparative Supplement examines both the usefulness and the failure points of this analogy.

The common rule in these cases is to distinguish formative importance from logical foundation.

4. Phenomenology as a Comparative Coordinate

Because Zero-Horizon addresses what is theoretically prior to photographic formation, phenomenology provides an important comparative coordinate. Husserl's intentionality and constitution of phenomena, and Merleau-Ponty's embodied perception, offer precise theoretical resources for considering how experience is formed.⁴

The distinction drawn here is not a hierarchy of primordially. A pre-reflective experience that is nonetheless formed as experience for a subject and a model that distinguishes world-side generation from subject-side experience have different explanatory objects.

This comparison becomes specific in Chapter One's four phases, Chapter Three's Proto-Qualia, and Chapter Four's internal modulation. Phenomenology is not borrowed as the foundation of Zero-Horizon. It is used as a comparative coordinate for testing where the boundary between world side and subject side is to be drawn.

5. Comparative Coordinates in Theories of Photography

Peirce's **index**, Barthes's account of the relation between the photograph and past reality, Benjamin's theory of technological reproducibility, and Sontag's critique of photographic culture all provide important coordinates for considering how a formed photograph relates to object, institution, memory, and society.⁵

Zero-Horizon does not replace these questions. It adds another one: the question of formation. Prior to asking what an image indicates, the theory asks how a single event of photographic formation is constituted through world-side conditions, change on the subject side, the operation of the camera, and a temporal cut.

These comparisons are taken up point by point from Chapter Five onward. At this introductory stage, Zero-Horizon is not ranked as more "fundamental" than existing photographic theory. The task is only to show where different questions enter into relation.

6. Scope of the Theory

The primary domain of application of Zero-Horizon Photographic Art Theory is **photographic art**.

Chapter One describes deep-layer generation on the world side through four phases. Chapter Two treats the outer-layer structure through three descriptive dimensions. Chapter Three limits Proto-Qualia to a structural threshold that may be established within that outer-layer structure. Chapter Four examines subject-side internal modulation. Chapter Five develops the one-time relational event of photographing formed by world, subject, camera, and temporal cut, and defines the photograph as a finite trace.

Chapter Six addresses the relation between the formed photograph and the viewer through the viewing event. Chapter Seven re-examines the formative origin of photography in relation to the contemporary image environment, including generated images.

Questions may open from this structure toward other artistic domains, but the direct argumentative object of the present study remains photographic art.

After the seven principal chapters, the Relational Supplement examines the relation between Zero-Horizon and **Shadō**, which emerged from the same long-term photographic practice. Shadō is an independent practical system concerned with the practicing subject's disposition in photographic practice. Its function differs from the subject-side theory developed within Zero-Horizon. The two share a root in formative history while retaining different purposes and conceptual positions; their relation is therefore examined in terms of boundary and adjacency between two systems.

The Theoretical Supplement then refines the description of the outer-layer structure. The Comparative Supplement clarifies the boundaries of external references in the theory's formative history. The Verification Supplement addresses internal objections and conditions under which reconsideration would be required. The Operational Part moves to structural confirmation and authorial positioning of already-formed works.

Chapter One begins with Proto-zero, Zero-tremor, Zero-response, and Zero-return, examining their definitions, necessity, comparative coordinates, mutual relations, and theoretical limits.

Chapter One — The Four Phases of Zero-Horizon

A Model of Deep-Layer Generation on the World Side

The four phases of Zero-Horizon are described through the technical names **Proto-zero, Zero-tremor, Zero-response, and Zero-return**. Each phase performs a distinct explanatory function within deep-layer generation on the world side. They are not physical stages, psychological states, or categories of completed works.

The functional sequence may be summarized as follows:

Proto-zero → Zero-tremor → Zero-response → Zero-return (re-equilibration)
→ renewed possibility of deviation

This ordering is logical and functional. It does not constitute a measured chronological series.

Methodological Position of the Four-Phase Model

1. Methodological Limitation of the Four-Phase Model

The four phases are an analytical model for describing deep-layer generation on the world side. Their object is world-side generation that may participate in photographic formation. The psychological state of the subject, the viewer's emotion, and the classification of formed works belong to different explanatory domains addressed later.

The model contains a logical order: Proto-zero to Zero-tremor, Zero-tremor to Zero-response, and Zero-response to Zero-return. The concern is to articulate differences of generative function. Clock-time measurement lies outside the responsibility of this model.

The four phases also differ in function from the outer-layer structure and from the operational vocabulary used for works. Chapter One deals only with phase differences within deep-layer generation on the world side. The distinctions from later concepts are defined again at the point where each of those concepts is introduced.

2. Epistemological Position of the Four Phases

The four phases are not a classificatory table of directly observed objects. Nor are they arbitrary names. They conceptually reconstruct explanatory differences required when photographic theory asks about conditions prior to photographic formation.

Each phase bears an independent explanatory function while remaining coherent with the others and differentiated from the later responsibilities of the outer-layer structure, subject-side internal modulation, and the theory of photographic formation. In

this respect, the four-phase model is neither a direct-measurement model of empirical science nor an arbitrary symbolic system. It is an analytical model for describing conditions of formation within a theory of photographic art.

3. Meaning of the Term “Transition”

This chapter uses the term **transition** between phases. Transition does not mean that a physical object moves from one container into another. It indicates that the function required to describe one generative situation changes and another descriptive situation becomes necessary.

The boundaries among the four phases are therefore established by changes in explanatory function rather than by numerical thresholds. These boundaries are distinct from the structural threshold defined later and from classificatory terms used for formed works.

I. Proto-zero

Undifferentiated Equilibrium and Generative Possibility

1. Definition

Proto-zero is the equilibrium phase on the world side in which difference has not yet become dominant as a particular direction, object, or meaning.

Equilibrium here does not mean a complete absence of difference. It means a state in which the possibility remains that difference may later be organized into relations, while no particular direction has become dominant. In this sense Proto-zero provides the point of departure for generation.

2. Theoretical Necessity

To describe the deviation treated in the next phase, a reference phase is required. If that reference were a completed order or a fixed arrangement of objects, deviation could be understood only as disturbance of an already established state.

Proto-zero instead establishes a neutral equilibrium prior to completed order. This allows later deviation to be located within generation itself. Its theoretical function is therefore to provide the reference phase that makes both deviation and return describable.

3. Undifferentiation and Potentiality

Undifferentiation means that differences may exist while remaining undetermined as particular objects, meanings, or directions.

Such a state contains generative possibility. **Potentiality** is used analytically to indicate that difference can still be organized into relations. It is not an independent physical quantity, and Proto-zero does not presuppose direct correspondence with a quantum *potential state* or with physical *energy*.

The term serves to affirm generative possibility. If Proto-zero were defined as complete absence of difference, later deviation could be explained only as something suddenly added from outside. The possibility of deviation held within Proto-zero allows Zero-tremor to be positioned as a functional change within the same generative process.

Potentiality names the generative possibility of Proto-zero as an attribute of that phase, rather than as a fifth element.

4. Structural Neutrality

The word *quietness* may accompany Proto-zero as a sensory metaphor for structural neutrality. The positive definition, however, is equilibrium in which difference has not become dominant in a particular direction.

Here, quietness serves, at the level of language, as a supplement to structural neutrality. Emotional calm and the atmosphere of a work remain outside the scope of the term as used in this study.

5. Comparative Coordinates: Phenomenology, Ma, and Kū

The relevant axis of comparison between Proto-zero and phenomenology is the object of description, not the depth of origin. Phenomenology addresses with precision how the world appears for a subject, including pre-reflective experience. Proto-zero, by contrast, establishes as an analytical model world-side generation distinguished from the content of subject-side experience.

Proto-zero therefore need not be ranked as a universal reality “more prior” than phenomenology. The difference is methodological: a theory describing subject-side experience and a model describing world-side generation while distinguishing it from that experience have different explanatory objects.

The Japanese concepts *ma* (間) and *kū* (空) may also be lexically adjacent, but they are polysemous concepts already involving relationality or spatiality. Proto-zero **does not derive its theoretical foundation from them**. Its limited function is equilibrium in which difference has not become dominant in a particular direction.

6. Relation to the Other Phases

Proto-zero provides the reference against which deviation can arise. In Zero-tremor, asymmetry appears within this equilibrium. In Zero-return, a structure that has passed through deviation and response moves again toward neutral equilibrium.

At the level of Proto-zero, its theoretical task is to provide the reference for deviation and return.

7. Position within Photographic Theory

Proto-zero is the reference phase from which world-side description is traced back toward conditions prior to photographic formation.

Photographic formation itself is treated later as a one-time relational event of photographing involving world-side conditions, subject-side internal modulation, the camera, and a temporal cut. Proto-zero provides the point of departure for the world-side description within that theory of formation.

II. Zero-tremor

Indeterminate-Direction Deviation within Equilibrium

1. Definition

Zero-tremor is an indeterminate-direction deviation arising within the equilibrium of Proto-zero.

When the phrase *minimal deviation* is used, *minimal* does not indicate a measurable quantity. It refers to the first difference distinguished within the deep-layer model. Proto-zero is characterized by the absence of directional predominance; in Zero-tremor that equilibrium begins to acquire asymmetry.

2. Position of Deviation

Zero-tremor is described as a difference in world-side structure distinguished from the subject's recognition or choice. Zero-Horizon separates world-side difference from the photographer's intention and does not reduce it to an effect of subject-side recognition.

At the same time, this theory does not attempt to provide a physical account of the ultimate cause of deviation. Zero-tremor is positioned as the description of a generative phase rather than as a theory of ultimate causation.

3. Deviation as Asymmetry

The deviation of Zero-tremor indicates that concrete asymmetry begins to appear within equilibrium. No value hierarchy of normal/abnormal is required between Proto-zero and Zero-tremor. Deviation is treated as the first functional situation in which generative possibility moves toward a change in relations.

4. Meaning and Direction

The positive definition of Zero-tremor does not include completed meaning or purpose. Meanings may later be formed by subjects or viewers, but those later meanings are not projected retrospectively into the world-side structure of Zero-tremor.

Indeterminate direction means that purposive direction has not yet been established within the model.

5. Comparative Coordinates: Pre-reflectivity and the Unactualized

When phenomenology treats pre-reflective experience or conditions of appearance, a correlation between subject and world is already involved. Zero-tremor describes not that experiential content but world-side deviation distinguished from subject-side recognition.

The distinction from pre-reflective experience is therefore one of explanatory object rather than a hierarchy of primordality. Comparison with phenomenology serves to prevent subject experience from being prematurely imported into deep-layer generation.

Words adjacent to Japanese thought and aesthetics—such as *yuragi*, the unactualized, or a sign of what is coming—may serve as comparative vocabulary for change before direction is fixed. Zero-tremor itself, however, is limited to indeterminate-direction deviation. Emotional fluctuation, aesthetic sensitivity, or genealogical identity with those traditional concepts lies outside its definition.

6. Numerical Non-Identity

A generative occurrence that has passed through Zero-tremor is numerically different from one that has not. This non-identity establishes a difference in generative history.

Even when Zero-return moves toward re-equilibration, that difference of history remains within the logic of the four phases. This does not require a substantialist claim that “the world remembers” the past. It requires only that a phase that has passed through deviation be theoretically distinguished from one that has not.

This distinction prepares for, but is not identical with, the numerical non-identity of photographing events examined in Chapter Five.

7. Distinction from Subject-Side Experience

A photographer’s sensing of “something” is treated in Chapter Four as subject-side internal modulation. Zero-tremor is deviation in deep-layer generation on the world side.

This distinction prevents experiential words such as *fluctuation*, *presence*, or *premonition* from being directly identified with world-side structure.

8. Relation to Zero-response

Zero-tremor describes the emergence of difference. Zero-response describes the phase in which that difference takes on structural responsiveness as a structural difference that enters into relation within deep-layer generation on the world side.

The difference is functional rather than quantitative. The transition from Zero-tremor to Zero-response is therefore logical, not an automatically operating mechanical causality.

9. Position within Photographic Theory

Zero-tremor is not a term for classifying blur, grain, tilt, chance, or other visible qualities in a formed work.

Its importance for photographic theory lies in making world-side difference describable prior to subject-side selection. How that difference participates in photographic

formation is limited by the later discussions of the outer-layer structure, subject-side internal modulation, and the camera.

III. Zero-response

The Phase in Which Deviation Enters into Relation as Structural Difference

1. Definition

Zero-response is the phase in which a deviation arising as Zero-tremor takes on structural responsiveness as a structural difference that enters into relation within deep-layer generation on the world side.

Responsiveness here does not personify the world. It indicates that deviation becomes related to subsequent structure within the generative process. Meaning-response and emotional response therefore lie outside the definition.

The word response condenses a function beyond mere deviation: the formation of relations. No responding subject is posited. Because response carries dialogical implications in ordinary language, the term is restricted throughout this study to structural responsiveness.

2. Why Zero-response Is Necessary

Zero-response is distinguished in the four-phase model because the emergence of deviation and the formation of relations perform different explanatory functions. Zero-tremor addresses the emergence of deviation; Zero-response addresses the situation in which deviation enters into relation within generation.

3. Functional Difference from Zero-tremor

The difference between Zero-tremor and Zero-response concerns function rather than magnitude. Zero-tremor is deviation in equilibrium. Zero-response is the phase in which deviation is established as structural difference bearing relation.

4. Comparative Coordinates: Appearance and Responsiveness

Phenomenological appearance and meaning formation are described within a relation between subject and world. Zero-response addresses neither something being given to a subject nor a pre-stage of phenomenological appearance. It addresses the world-side situation in which deviation has acquired relation within deep-layer generation.

The distinction is therefore not temporal priority but difference of explanatory object: world-side formation of relations and subject-side appearance.

Likewise, when responsive understandings of nature in Japanese thought or aesthetics are used as comparative coordinates, the *response* of Zero-response must not be expanded into mutual resonance between subject and personified nature. The phase describes only the organization of deviation as relation within generation.

5. Distinction from the Formation of Meaning

Zero-response may participate in conditions under which meaning can later be formed, but meaningful content belongs to subsequent subject-side processes. Meaning attributed by a subject or viewer is treated separately from the world-side structure described here.

World-side structure and subject-side experience are related while remaining different domains; they do not form a transfer relation of identical content.

6. Distinction from Subject-Side Response

Although the same ordinary word *response* may appear in both contexts, Zero-response and subject-side response concern different objects. Zero-response is a structural difference within deep-layer generation on the world side. Bodily and perceptual changes on the subject side are treated in Chapter Four as internal modulation.

7. Relation to the Outer-Layer Structure

The four phases of Chapter One describe deep-layer generation. The three outer-layer aspects of Chapter Two describe one outer-layer process from different directions.

The two are related, but no generative staircase maps the four deep phases one-to-one onto the three outer-layer aspects. Proto-Qualia is likewise not a direct product of Zero-response. Chapter Three defines it as a boundary concept concerning the outer-layer structure as a whole.

Zero-response is therefore limited to explaining the situation in which difference becomes relational within deep-layer generation. Concrete configurations and temporal density in the outer-layer structure, qualitative response on the subject side, and fixation by the camera belong to later explanatory domains.

8. Position within Photographic Theory

Zero-response is positioned as one phase of deep-layer generation on the world side that may participate in a one-time relational event of photographing.

Photographic formation also involves subject-side internal modulation, bodily position, judgment, the operation of the camera, and a temporal cut. Zero-response is one world-side phase that may participate in this relation, not the sole cause of photographic formation.

IV. Zero-return

Neutralization and the Possibility of Renewal

1. Definition

Zero-return is the phase in which difference formed through Zero-tremor and Zero-response moves toward re-equilibration accompanied by neutralization rather than remaining fixed in a single direction.

The object of return is not an identical past state but a neutral equilibrium in which deviation may arise again. Zero-return therefore functions not simply as an endpoint but as a phase that opens generation toward renewed possibility.

2. Neutralization

Neutralization in Zero-return describes a functional shift from directional occupation toward re-equilibration while preserving difference as part of generative history.

A state after Zero-return is not treated as numerically identical with Proto-zero before deviation and response. The four-phase model preserves non-identity of generative history while describing re-equilibration.

This is why Zero-return differs from a simple return to the same point. Its function is less to restore a past state than to release the structure from fixation in a particular direction and reopen the possibility of further deviation.

Zero-return therefore relates both to closure and to renewed beginning, but it is treated as a function in the generative model rather than as a single measurable moment.

3. Avoiding Teleology

The theoretical function of Zero-return is restricted to neutralization following deviation and response. A world-purpose of self-maintenance lies outside its scope, preventing the four phases from acquiring a cosmological teleology.

4. Return and Recurrence

The four phases form an open recurrent structure. After deviation and response, the ensuing situation is numerically non-identical with the one that preceded it, and renewed possibility opens from that changed generative position.

Proto-zero → Zero-tremor → Zero-response → Zero-return (re-equilibration)
→ renewed possibility of deviation

This formulation describes recurrence as a structure containing both generative history and the possibility of restart.

5. Comparative Coordinates: Neutralization and Convergence

Phenomenological discussions of neutralization or suspension concern modes of subject-side experience or intention. Zero-return instead describes the function by which difference in deep-layer generation on the world side moves toward re-equilibration.

The vocabulary may be adjacent, but the explanatory objects differ. Zero-return is not a process in which the subject's intentionality grows calm.

Words such as convergence, settling, or after-resonance in Japanese aesthetics may serve as sensory comparative vocabulary for re-equilibration, but Zero-return is defined structurally: generation is reopened toward an equilibrium in which deviation can arise again.

6. Distinction from Emotional Stillness

Zero-return describes neutralization and re-equilibration within deep-layer generation on the world side. Emotional calming in the photographer or viewer, the after-resonance of a work, or the word *nagi* belong to other explanatory domains.

7. Position within Photographic Theory

Zero-return provides part of the world-side generative background that may participate in photographic formation. A photographing event is not fixed to a single point within the four phases. The model instead shows that world-side generation contains not only the emergence of difference but also neutralization and renewed possibility.

The one-time character of photography is treated in Chapter Five as the numerical non-identity of the one-time relational event of photographing.

V. The Relational Structure of the Four Phases

Generation, Difference, and Return

The four phases describe deep-layer generation on the world side through functional differences.

Proto-zero provides equilibrium without directional predominance. Zero-tremor describes indeterminate-direction deviation within that equilibrium. Zero-response describes the situation in which deviation takes on structural responsiveness as a structural difference that enters into relation within deep-layer generation on the world side. Zero-return describes movement toward re-equilibration accompanied by neutralization.

Together, the four phases articulate world-side generation prior to photographic formation as a transition through the emergence of difference, the formation of relations, and re-equilibration.

1. Continuity and Boundaries

The four phases articulate a single generative process through functional differences. Their boundaries are conceptual boundaries established according to the function under description. They therefore combine continuity with distinguishability.

2. Temporality

The four phases have a logical order, but that order is functional rather than a four-stage sequence of clock time.

Generation that has passed through Zero-tremor, Zero-response, or Zero-return is not numerically identical with a preceding situation. The phases therefore possess a temporality marked by generative history rather than a return to numerically identical states.

The one-time character of photography is not directly derived from this temporality. Chapter Five defines it independently through the numerical non-identity of one-time

relational events of photographing formed through world, subject, camera, and temporal cut.

3. Causality

The model gives priority to functional differentiation over purposive causality.

Zero-return does not posit a purpose of the world. It describes neutralization following deviation and response. The theoretical function of the four phases is to make functional differences within generation analytically describable.

4. Relation to Photographic Formation

The four phases describe deep-layer generation on the world side that may participate in photographic formation. Subject-side internal modulation, the camera, bodily position, judgment, and temporal cut also participate in formation.

The four phases are therefore positioned as the base model of deep-layer generation on the world side within the theory of photographic formation.

5. Explanatory Scope and Limits

The four-phase model allows what is theoretically prior to photographic formation to be described as generation rather than as a blank. It distinguishes world-side difference from subject-side intention and articulates the emergence of difference, the formation of relations, and re-equilibration while keeping deep-layer generation distinct from subject experience.

Its responsibility is limited to describing deep-layer generation on the world side within a theory of photographic art. The origin of the universe as such, the neural mechanisms of perception, the value of works, and the emotional content of viewer experience belong to other fields of inquiry.

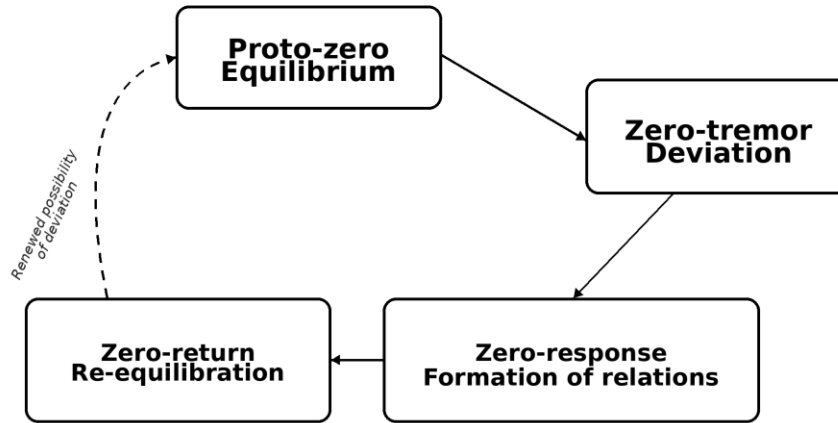
6. Conceptual Discrimination and Theoretical Coherence

The distinction among the four phases is justified by their non-interchangeable explanatory functions. Proto-zero describes equilibrium as reference; Zero-tremor deviation; Zero-response the formation of relations; Zero-return re-equilibration.

If these functions became interchangeable, the theoretical justification for distinguishing four phases would be lost.

At the same time, the deep four phases do not compete for explanatory responsibility with the outer-layer structure, subject-side internal modulation, photographic formation, or the operational vocabulary of works. The model does not attempt to complete photographic formation by means of the four phases alone. Its responsibility remains deep-layer generation on the world side.

Figure 1. The Four Phases of Zero-Horizon — Phase Transition in Deep-Layer Generation on the World Side



Functional arrangement; does not indicate measured time or mechanical causation.

VI. From the Deep Four Phases to the Outer-Layer Structure

Separating Generative Phases from Descriptive Dimensions

The four phases of Zero-Horizon describe generative phases in the world-side deep layer.

The **Primary Structural Aspects, Composite Structural Aspects, and Structural Time-Aspects** addressed in Chapter Two belong to the same world side but perform a different function. They describe one outer-layer process through local difference, configurational state, and temporal density.

Connecting the deep four phases and the outer three aspects into a single generative staircase would conflate phases of generation with dimensions of description. A one-to-one correspondence between Zero-response and the Primary Structural Aspects, or between Zero-return and the Structural Time-Aspects, would likewise duplicate explanatory functions.

The following three distinctions are therefore maintained:

- **deep four phases** = functional phases of generation;
- **outer three Structural Aspects** = descriptive directions of the outer-layer process;
- **Primary / Secondary / Temporal Indicators** = operational vocabulary for confirming formed works.

Chapter Two proceeds from this separation to examine the world-side outer-layer structure through three descriptive dimensions.

Epilogue — The Faint Contour of Zero-return

Even after a photograph has been formed, the world continues beyond its image.

The one-time character of photographing belongs to that one event. The photograph carries the trace of that event into a time different from that of photographing. The light and movement that have passed beyond the image, the position of the body, and the surrounding presence continue onward with the world.

In time, the work is placed before a new gaze. The experience that opens there gives rise, each time, to a new relation between the image that remains and the present.

As the work moves through time, the site of photographing recedes into the past. The place where it is exhibited, the viewers, and the context surrounding the image all change. The photograph's origin remains in that one event, while the trace that remains enters into successive relations with different presents.

The time of the photograph and the time of the world proceed in different directions. The image appears in the present bearing the one-time character of the past, while the world continues to change beyond it.

Even after one act of photographing has ended, change in the world continues. The photograph moves through a different time as a trace cut from that flow.

Zero-return, as a re-equilibration accompanied by neutralization, opens room for difference to arise again.

From there, inquiry returns to the Zero-Horizon whenever the question of photographic formation is raised.

Notes

These notes are provided not to establish external theories as the logical foundation of Zero-Horizon Photographic Art Theory, but to make traceable the formative references, comparative coordinates, conceptual boundaries, and contemporary contexts used in the text.

1. Shunsuke Tsurumi, *Genkai Geijutsu-ron* [Marginal Art Theory] (Tokyo: Keisō Shobō, 1967). In this study, Marginal Art is not treated as a theoretical foundation of Zero-Horizon Photographic Art Theory. It is referred to in a limited sense as a comparative coordinate in the formative history of the theory for tracing inquiry from established art institutions back toward their conditions.
2. Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco J. Varela, *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1980). The distinction between external influence and internal change on the side affected is referred to here only as a comparative coordinate in the formative history of the theory for subject-side internal modulation. Autopoiesis is not applied isomorphically to photographic action itself.
3. Niels Bohr, *Atomic Theory and the Description of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), is included as a representative historical reference in the comparison with quantum theory. Neither the four phases nor the theory of photographic formation developed here is derived from Bohr's physics. The reference documents a formative stimulus and the limits of comparison.
4. Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch: Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1913); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945). Intentionality, the constitution of phenomena, and embodied perception are referred to as comparative coordinates for distinguishing the explanatory object of subject-side experience from generation on the world side.
5. In comparisons with theories of photography, C. S. Peirce's *index*, Roland Barthes's account of the temporal relation between the photograph and past reality, Walter Benjamin's theory of technological reproducibility, and Susan Sontag's critique of photographic culture are used as principal comparative coordinates concerning already-formed photographs. See Notes 10–13 for the relevant references.
6. David J. Chalmers, "Panpsychism and Panprotopsyism," in Torin Alter and Yujin Nagasawa, eds., *Consciousness in the Physical World: Perspectives on Russellian Monism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 246–276. The comparison is made not to derive Proto-Qualia from panprotopsyism, but to clarify its boundary with metaphysical discussions concerning properties prior to *phenomenal experience*.
7. Torin Alter and Sam Coleman, "Russellian Physicalism and Protophenomenal Properties," *Analysis* 80, no. 3 (2020): 409–417, <https://doi.org/10.1093/analys/anaa006>. The treatment of *protophenomenal properties* as *non-structural properties* provides a comparative point for clarifying their difference from Proto-Qualia as defined here as a structural threshold.
8. Marcel Kvassay, "The Meta-Problem and the Transfer of Knowledge between Theories of Consciousness: A Software Engineer's Take," arXiv:1903.03418 (2019), <https://arxiv.org/abs/1903.03418>. This reference is included to document a prior occurrence of the string *proto-qualia*. It does not indicate conceptual identity or genealogical continuity with Proto-Qualia as defined in this study.
9. Francisco G. Varela, Humberto R. Maturana, and Ricardo B. Uribe, "Autopoiesis: The Organization of Living Systems, Its Characterization and a Model," *BioSystems* 5, no. 4 (1974): 187–196, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0303-2647\(74\)90031-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0303-2647(74)90031-8); Humberto R. Maturana, "The Organization

- of the Living: A Theory of the Living Organization,” *International Journal of Man-Machine Studies* 7, no. 3 (1975): 313–332, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0020-7373\(75\)80015-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0020-7373(75)80015-0). Self-production and structural determinacy are not transferred into the theory of photographic practice. These works are used only as limited comparative references in the formative history for considering the relation between external influence and change on the subject side.
10. Charles Sanders Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, vol. 2, *Elements of Logic*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932), CP 2.281. Peirce’s discussion of the photograph as an example of an *index* having a real and physical connection with its object is referred to here. This study distinguishes indexicality from its definition of the photographic trace as originating in a one-time relational event of photographing.
 11. Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 217–251. Benjamin’s discussion of reproducibility and authenticity is used as a comparative coordinate for distinguishing the one-time character of the photographing event from reproducible forms of realization.
 12. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981). Chapter Five refers to the temporal asymmetry between the photograph and past reality; Chapter Six refers to *punctum* in a limited sense as a comparative coordinate concerning a viewer-specific point of effect.
 13. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977). Her discussion of photography’s involvement in social and cultural practices such as knowledge, evidence, possession, experience, and consumption is referred to as a comparative coordinate concerning uses and interpretations that arise after photographic formation.
 14. For the contemporary environment of photography and generated images, see *Aperture*, no. 257, *Image Worlds to Come: Photography & AI* (Winter 2025; published December 1, 2024); Rob Horning, “What Is Realism in the Age of AI?,” *Aperture*, January 31, 2025; and *Foam Magazine*, no. 66, *MISSING MIRROR – Photography Through the Lens of AI* (2024). These materials establish the contemporary context addressed in Chapter Seven; they do not constitute theoretical foundations of Zero-Horizon Photographic Art Theory.

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This Bibliography organizes the references that actually operate in the text by function: formative references, comparative and conceptual-boundary references, and contemporary contexts.

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C O L O P H O N

Zero-Horizon Photographic Art Theory

The Zero-Horizon and the Structure of Photographic Formation

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