A woman stands, facing away, against a black door. She is wearing a black dress, to the knee. And high heels. The scene is illuminated by the flash from the camera. Her dress absorbs the light giving no hint of texture or surface quality. The light picks out the shape of her body as a faint luminous outline on the black door.

The scene is repeated through the sequence of 450 photographs. The pose is struck time and again, each occasion resulting in a new image. To the naked eye the differences in the model's disposition are barely perceptible.

Repetition has been a key strategy in the visual arts throughout modernism, coming to a peak in its late period. Indeed, many artists employed this strategy to draw attention to the systemic and non-original nature of their work. Guy Debord's writings[1] also critiqued the spectacle as a world of illusions, which camouflaged the repetitive nature of everyday life with an illusion of choice (which in itself was an invitation to repeat and duplicate). Effectively consumer culture is based on the mechanization of duplication. In the context of the spectacle, duplication becomes a desirable effect.

Some of the most striking examples of duplication are found in photography. Walter Benjamin[2] discusses the importance of the 'mémoire involuntaire',

described by Marcel Proust as productive of intense and vivid streams of uncontrolled memories, as opposed to the 'mémoire voluntaire', an intentional recall of images. The reproduction of images derived via photographic processes creates an image bank that services the voluntary memory, thereby canceling the free association of involuntarily recalled images. In Benjamin's view, photography can be seen as a medium of duplication, precisely because the endless circulation of imagery replaces another, pre-photographic mnemonic system.

Furthermore, the photograph has the ability to repeat subject matter faithfully. To the viewer the photograph is secondary to the thing it depicts. In this way the subject matter of the image makes us forget the existence of the mechanism, the camera. The image becomes the unmediated double of what is pictured. The photograph as a sign transmits the literal meaning. It is the mechanical analogue of what it depicts. In this way, according to Roland Barthes the photograph is unique, in that it 'constitutes a message without a code'[3]. Advances in technology, namely the arrival of digital photography, have created a world of representations that are significantly more unstable than earlier images. Digital photography accelerates the processing of images and uses techniques of post production to sever the link between the event or subject and the final image.

In Claude Levi-Strauss's thinking, the photograph repeats the scene it depicts and acts as a mnemonic tool. In other words, it recalls the past and turns it into a representation to be viewed in the present. In Bruggemann's photographs the prior event (the staging and taking of the photograph) over and again. The past and the present alternate with one another in rapid turns. The subject matter (event) and the photograph (representation) erase their differences and blend together as a single entity. It may therefore be argued that the small variations between each take are misleading, wrongly steering the viewer towards the search for a minimal plot. Of course, the narrative never takes place, though it is in the nature of the observant viewer to expand the space of small differences. Faced with the reduction of the viewer's space, he/she inevitably responds by attempting to expand it once more.

Though Bruggemann's photographs do not make explicit reference to a counting system, the relationship between repetition and enumeration is implicit. This serial approach does not engage an emotive response. It limits the viewer's autonomy and proposes a specific relationship between subject, object and artist. The artist commands the model to strike a pose for the first photograph. The command is then enacted by the model. For each subsequent take, the model must remember the previous pose. Though the commands from the artist remain the same, the body cannot execute them - it cannot *repeat*

faithfully. The cycle is completed as the viewer re-enacts this failure through the viewing process.

In a prior work, Bruggemann commissioned a sign-making company to write the word 'copyright' in vinyl letters on seven prepared wooden supports. These were subsequently coated in clear resin. The handmade process resulted in subtle differences between each work, some were not entirely straight, others bore finger marks. Bruggemann is interested in the execution of the concept, in how human intervention in the idea causes the concept to blur. In this way, the idea never corresponds exactly to its execution. Moreover, the works, though similar, are not representative of one another. A may be as similar to B as B is to A. The two objects resemble one another in a reflexive way, though the same claim cannot be made for representation. Instead, one object denotes another.

In this way Bruggeman draws our attention from sameness to difference and back again. As we scan through the images we are initially struck by their similarities. The photographs of the model appear all the same to begin with. On further scrutiny we discover small differences in the overall positioning. Finally, we are forced to conclude that the images are more similar than not. To put it another way, each image recalls the previous one, or indeed every other one, returning us to the beginning of our enquiry. However, if the world of figurative language is divided between metaphor, based in resemblance, and metonymy,

based in juxtaposition , then the images cannot be read only internally. Consequently, the image of the model also recalls all other similar images. The attempt to construct an internal logic through repetition is foiled by the fact that the image resembles all the other fashion shots we have ever encountered. The artist confronts us with the conclusion that every object in fact resembles every other by virtue of our memory recall. But if all things refer to one another, how can we trace mimesis to its origins?

Platonic thinking refers to artworks as mimetic. Mimesis is therefore a representation, it is a lacking double; the closer it resembles reality, the more fraudulent it becomes. Therefore, the thing it attempts to represent can never be made manifest as an image. Here, mimesis refers to an impossible search for the original. Jacques Derrida uses the concept of mimesis differently, in relation to texts, which are non-disposable doubles that always stand in relation to what has preceded them. Texts are deemed 'nondisposable' and 'double' in that they always refer to something that has preceded them and are thus 'never the origin, never inner, never outer, but always doubled'[4]. This doubling could be transferred to the realm of images in art, in that their capacity for re-enactment always recalls a prior image, a precursor. Ferdinand de Saussure's earlier structural analysis, the study of sign relationships, suggests that concepts 'are defined not positively, in terms of their content, but *negatively* by contrast with other items in the same system. What characterizes each most exactly is being whatever the others are not'[5]. The doubling effect Derrida speaks of might arise

from a negative relationship. In other words, images always carry their doubles, yet these doubles are not the same: the image is defined precisely by the image that it is not. Using this analysis, Bruggemann's images cannot be seen individually, nor should they be understood as a totality. Instead, each image is set against the total number of others, similar, though in opposition to every other image.

The photograph depicts a woman in high heels, her back turned, against a black door. She is wearing a black dress, to the knee. The scene is illuminated by the flash from the camera. The light picks out the shape of her body as a faint luminous outline on the black door.

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1. Guy Debord, *The Society of Spectacle*, Zone Books (1967),1995

2. W. Benjamin, *On some Motifs in Baudelaire*, 1939

3. Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-text*, Hill & Wang, New York, 1977

4. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, John Hopkins University Press, 1974

5. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (trans.Roy Harris), Duckworth, London, (1916), 1983