For Contact Sheet, Document asks a photographer about the unseen story of a frame that defines their work.

Date taken: 2016

Location: New York & San Francisco

1938 is a work from my recent photograph series called Choreographs, which is part of a larger body of work called Multichannel Works. I have been working on this since 2013 and I place different photographs into each of Photoshop's three color channels—red, green and blue.

The fall of 2014, I lived in New York whilst I taught at Princeton. I hired a group of student dancers from Columbia and they appeared in 1938. I photographed the dancers outside on the West Side Highway. When I looked at the images a month later, I realized my assistant J.R. Valenzuela had captured the same moment as myself. His picture however, featured me photographing the group of dancers, which I thought would be interesting to combine with my image.
In addition to images of dance, I used images of architecture, sculpture or landscape. I was in San Francisco for 1938 and was photographing architecture and sculpture, when I came across this large, concrete sculpture in Embarcadero that celebrates the Quebec Independence movement.

1938 went through about two weeks of trying different things: many versions, painting parts of the picture, eliminating parts of the channels to eventually arrive at the final image. One of the things I’m fascinated by in this picture, is the indication of a process where certain parts of the picture come through, certain parts recede. So, there’s a very powerful graphic element. I’m very sensitive to the history of alternative color processes from the sixties.

When I started working with a digital camera I decided to title the works after the four digit camera file. The camera spits out some letters and digits, so I’m taking the easy route just numbering, not titling them. Although most of the images I have, I give common names and the common name for this 1938 is “Self Portrait.”

With Choreographs the challenge is to create something I haven’t seen before. I have no idea how these different channels are going to work together and what happens when I apply transformations to them. It’s a way of working with very unexpected results, which is something I’m very interested in.