

Nanopublication – The codex has no one to ask: stock imagery's bias runs without an author

by Arnaud Quercy

The line is authorship: the framework's codex vocabulary grips where a structure beneath the surface image can be named (P3a), but it is built for a singular emitter who could in principle be asked why – and stock-photo bias, especially once looped through AI generation, is a codex with no addressable speaker, only a converging statistical residue.

CONTEXT

☒ **Thin page** – the source itself is thin (teaser, notice, paywalled preamble). Distinct from truncation: nothing was cut by the pipeline.

WHAT THE SOURCE SAYS [1]

Simona Supekar's book *Stock Photo* argues that stock photography has long encoded racial and gender hierarchies – light-skinned Indian people over-represented, 'Black businessman' searches once returning images tied to crime, a 'happy family' that reads as White by default. These images function as culturally absorbed defaults: what audiences repeatedly see shapes what they expect to see. The review extends this into the AI era, where image generators trained on these same skewed databases now synthesize pictures to fill representational gaps that never organically existed – for instance, AI-generated results dominating a search for 'maternity' and 'Indian.' The bias is thus not a one-time artifact but a self-perpetuating loop between stock archives and generative systems.

WHERE THE LENS GRIPS

P3a's split between a physical invariant (the image's surface content) and an intentional invariant (why these forms, this hierarchy, and not others) resonates closely with Supekar's own language: photos as 'ciphers' that 'clue us in to ourselves,' revealing 'what we value, and what we do not' beneath the visible layer. That is precisely the claim that a structure beneath the material fact is latent, not automatically transmitted, and requires something like dialogue (Supekar's critical excavation) to be made explicit.

WHERE IT BREAKS

P19a and P14 model the codex as belonging to a singular artist who can, on request, articulate the intentional invariant – even an 'opaque' invariant presupposes someone who might eventually explain it. Stock photography's bias, and especially its AI-amplified sequel, has no such locus: the 'codex' is an aggregate of anonymous corporate curation and statistical training data with no one to interrogate about 'why these forms and not others.' This slips IF one reads P19a/P14 as requiring an identifiable authorial agent (the case then falls outside the model's reach); it holds IF one reads P14a's 'proto-codex... inaccessible even to the artist' as extensible to a collective, institutional 'artist' whose codex is simply maximally proto – diffuse but still, in principle, inducible from the body of work, as P14a allows.

PROPOSITIONAL GRID [2]

Read this grid. “Not evaluated” does **not** mean the source has nothing to say about that proposition. It means **the reading did not instruct it**. That is not a result, and it counts in no denominator. A silence, by contrast, is a finding: the reading touched the proposition without concluding, or noted its absence itself.

Evaluated

proposition		audit status	relational verdict
P3a	Double Structure of the Invariant	not audited	evidence-for
P14a	The Proto-Codex	not audited	open-question
P19a	Explicability as Condition	not audited	pressure-against

Remarkable silences

1 called for by what the reading found, and absent from the source.

- **P14 – The Codex as Overture**
The reading pairs P14 with P19a as co-evidence that the codex model presupposes a singular addressable artist, and resolves P19a explicitly as pressure-against, but leaves P14's own status – whether it too breaks, or is re-

deemed by the P14a extension – unresolved despite being invoked for the identical argumentative work.

Not evaluated (33) – P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14b, P15, P16, P16a, P17, P18, P18a, P19, P20, P21, P22, P23, P24, P25, P26, P27, P28, P29, P30, P31

Overall verdict: Bounded – taxonomy of the August 2026 pass, predating the move to relational verdicts. Kept as metadata: the gap between the two forms is data, not residue. This reading’s judgement is in the grid above.

Reading of 2026-07-09 · model claude-sonnet-5 · source 3,970 chars · 1 attempt(s)

FIRST PASS – KEPT AS WRITTEN

Reading produced by the T50 RSS pass, before the boundary lens. It is reproduced UNCORRECTED. Keeping it is the point: without it, a changed title is just a changed title – with it, what the second pass refused becomes legible.

Title it carried : « Stock Photography and the Codex of Recognition: Simona Supekar's Hidden History »

Stock photography operates as a crystallized codex—a systematized set of visual constraints (pose, lighting, demographic representation, emotional register) that propagates across millions of uses with minimal diffraction. Supekar's work reveals how this codex encodes structural racism and sexism not as aberrations but as intentional invariants. The 'hidden history' is the intentional structure beneath the surface. In the age of AI, this codex becomes the training data itself—the overture through which all subsequent image generation diffracts. The dilution crisis manifests here as maximum emission (billions of stock images) meeting zero diffraction (algorithmic reproduction of the same embedded biases). Supekar's scholarship is ideamorphic practice: making the codex visible so that future receivers can recognize what shaped their overture.

T50 RSS assessment · 2026-07-09 · remplacée par boundary-lens-2026-08

REFERENCES

[1] The Hidden History of Stock Photography. Hyperallergic, 2026-07-09. <https://hyperallergic.com/the-hidden-history-of-stock-photography/>

[2] Quercy, A. (2026). The 31 Propositions of Ideamorphism. <https://ideamorphism.org/en/publications/2026/03/the-31-propositions-of-ideamorphism.html>

EPISTEMIC PROFILE

Claim type	boundary reading
Voice	third person analysis
Epistemic status	bounded grip
Methodology	Boundary-finding lens applied to one source, model claude-sonnet-5, 1 attempt(s), traceability check passed.

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