Photographer: Roger Fenton  
Born 1819

Reflections

What was your first impression when you saw this photograph?

Do you think this looks like a dangerous environment?

If you were the photographer, would you have moved the cannonballs to make a better shot?

Do you think that in general photographers should never interfere with the scenes they shoot?

Photograph: The Valley of the Shadow of Death
Crimea (Russia)
1853

Contextual information

Photography's first major use in conflict was in the Crimea in the 1850s with photographers such as Roger Fenton capturing images of war for the first time.

Even at this stage, though, there were some question marks raised over the genuineness of the images he sent back home to be published.

There were two versions of a shot called 'Valley of the Shadow of Death', one with cannonballs spread around the landscape and one without.

This led some people, including more recently photographic thinkers like Susan Sontag, to question the validity of the image and whether it was staged, a question which has continued to rear its head in the years since.

For instance, in 2004, when the Daily Mirror newspaper was in trouble over apparently hoaxed photos taken at a prison in Iraq of British soldiers torturing Iraqi prisoners.

The Valley of the Shadow of Death, Roger Fenton, Picture source: Iconic Photos http://anunderstandingofphotography.wordpress.com