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Photography and Academic Research
Images in the Post-truth Era

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Photography As Social Research

In the intellectual circles of the 1980s and 1990s documentary photography became very unfashionable; it was seen as enabling a spurious claim to evidence or truth that, in fact, masked the workings of power. Documentary is again now the centre of attention, with a spate of new studies and large-scale exhibitions appearing in art museums. In this presentation, I will be looking at a range of documentary strategies, which involve some form of social research. Often, these practices involve long-term studies aimed at rendering visible antagonisms that are frequently ignored or treated superficially in the main-stream media.
Sarah Walpole
Archivist and Photo Curator, RAI

Sarah Walpole
in conversation with Barbara Knorpp

The Photography Collection of the Royal Anthropological Institute

This will be an introduction to the Royal Anthropological Institute collection of photographs, which is relatively unknown since the collection is not available online and only personal visitors to the Institute are able to see it. We will discuss the history and scope of the collection, and introduce some of the most interesting collections and the photographers who made them.

The history of the collection dates back to the earliest days of the two Societies which predated the Institute, the Ethnological Society of London, and the Anthropological Society of London, which later joined to form the Institute. From these Victorian days, the importance of photography for anthropology was recognised, and indeed a specific method of taking photographs was developed and laid out in the handbook, Notes and Queries. The collection includes images conforming to these guidelines, and some of a purely anthropometric nature, as well as many more spontaneous views. It covers photographs showing the physical nature of various peoples, their material culture, and their everyday lives, as well as the dances and ceremonies they may practice. The photographs show peoples from every corner of the globe, with, inevitably, particular emphasis on those countries which were part of the British Empire. There is also a substantial collection of archaeological photographs.

The images themselves may be in the form of glass plate negatives, lantern slides, loose or album prints of various kinds, and also paintings and drawings.

This is an opportunity to see many examples which it is hoped will give an idea of the scope of the collection, and provide inspiration for further investigations at the Institute.
Fiona Allen
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Photography: An American Monument

In 1976, Lee Friedlander published his celebrated photobook The American Monument. Intended as a contribution to America’s bicentennial celebrations, the book contained over two hundred images of late-nineteenth and twentieth century statues taken in towns and cities across the country. But although these statues depicted a range of historically significant figures, Friedlander’s images did not...

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Fictive Thesaurus: Semiotic Multivalence & Transactive Indexes

The polyphony of photographic meaning arises from the image’s capacity for accommodating a semiotic multivalence that emerges from a denotative singularity. Photography’s intrinsic link with indexicality expands onto the creation of archives: documentary, cultural, historical, of personal and collective experiences. Online depositories of events generated and circulated through social media and search engines are producing indexes and archives similar to bookshelves, files and scribbled notes. Yet, the indexing of information in archives impacts on the cognitive functions of memory and our capacity to store memories of events, by substituting indexical links for those memories instead. Moreover, the enhanced levels of accessibility and immediacy of digital archives amplify our trust towards the validity of their content, aided by the persuasiveness of photographic veracity. Once our analytical and critical reflexes are tempered, the currency of the photo document is often employed for poetic claims.

What is the role of the photo-document after digital archives and the crisis of the documentary tradition? What function does the photographic document still retain in the re-contested relationship between truth and poetics? This paper will discuss how the contained and fragmented structure of an archive provides a fertile ground for the production and assertion of fictitious appropriations as facts, and, more importantly, consider the cognitive implications of this phenomenon.

Iren Annus
Institute of English and American Studies, University of Szeged, Hungary

Imaging power in politics: Photography and the representation of children

For many, photography is still viewed as a field that represents truth and objective reality. This basic presumption significantly contributes to the power of photography in the media, even though we are aware that what we see as news is an ideologically shaped representation and the result of a cautious and purposeful selection process. Framed by Cultural Studies, the presentation investigates a selection of photographic images of children in both the public and semi-public domains in relation to the current migrant crisis in Hungary in an effort to map their changing content and ideological subtext. The paper argues that images of children in particular have emerged as a powerful means to reinforce specific ideologies, political positions and related structures of domination, through appealing to aspects of essentialist mode of thinking. This process is characterized by the manipulation of traditional frames and meanings of the representation of children, the subsequent subversion of values associated with childhood and the body of a child, and repeated abuses of both the subject and the photographer – the latter of whom often simply disappears in the process. These photographs clearly demonstrate that the representation of the human body continues to operate as a significant force in political and cultural capital – albeit in new ways – which could be readily employed as a set of instruments in socio-political debates and the affirmation of hegemonic power of domination.

Joana Bezerra / Sharli Paphitis
Community Engagement Division, Rhodes University, South Africa

Connecting through images: feedback to communities beyond written words

Feedback is a key component of research ethics, particularly if the project aims to be participatory at its core. Traditionally, feedback is done either verbally or in writing, but even when it is done orally, there is usually some text involved in the form of posters, stickers, or bullet points. Researchers assume that all members of the communities they are working with are literate.
Translation plays a big role in building bridges and research outcomes can be translated to the language of the community, but there is still an underlying assumption that community members are literate. What happens when a researcher is working with a community that is mostly illiterate? This paper presents the experience of a researcher working with a predominantly illiterate community and the use of photographs and audios to give feedback and work together with a community in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. Community history and family histories were conducted with a Xhosa community that lives inside a game reserve.

This research was the first step of a community-development project, where mapping the history of both the community and the individual families were the first phase of understanding their present. Community members were asked to share photos that were special to them as well as objects that had a special meaning that were then photographed. The paper discusses the role of photographs in the research process, the importance of photos in different cultures and how images can be used to build trust.

Marco Bohr
Loughborough University, UK

Photography, Politics and Digital Networks in a ‘Post-Truth’ Era

According to Oxford Dictionaries, the term ‘post-truth’ finds its roots in an essay by the Serbian-American playwright Steve Tesich in The Nation magazine though it was Ralph Keyes’ 2004 book The Post-truth Era: Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life that brought the term to wider attention. It was not however until the year 2016 that the term gained wider public attention as journalists, politicians, political commentators and even comedians appropriated the term to describe claims made by the then Presidential candidate Donald Trump. Closely linked to ‘post-truth’ politics is the rise of the term ‘fake news’ which has been appropriated by a wide variety of different stakeholders describing ‘unauthorized’ news circulated online as false. However, ‘fake news’ has also been applied to the mainstream media in cases were news stories were erroneous, were not substantiated by credible sources or were later retracted. The interlinked discursive formation ‘post-truth’ and ‘fake news’ are primarily focused on the written word, the published news item, or focused on word, such as politician speaking at press conference. In parallel to this discursive formation however, the medium photography too has been increasingly entangled with notions of ‘post-truth’ and ‘fake news’. This paper will reveal that in the heated political and ideological battles of this period, photographs have, quite literally, been pushed onto the centre stage of the political agenda. With this increased attention towards the photographic image also came an increased amount of scrutiny: when is a photographic image ‘real’ and when is it fake? The paper will point to a false dichotomy that the terms ‘post-truth’ and ‘fake news’ have assumed in relation to the photographic image.

Carolina Cambre
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Montréal, Canada

Working with images: Being worked by images

This paper examines the process of analysis demanded by a large archive of photographs collected in the process of social research. How does one respond to the encounter with the image in research and look at the levels at which it operates and how it moves fluidly between them. What kinds of approaches can facilitate an examination that refuses to locate the image or assign it an “address” but rather responds to how it is a locating, how it is a verb as well as a noun? What then happens when many, many images are in question? Given that we live in a society saturated with visual images, we have all become accustomed to using and producing images. While we navigate the image-scape successfully, we may not necessarily understand how images work on/with us and what becomes of reality when it is understood as a function of the image’s perspective. Remarkably, insights into the pedagogical function, the power and effect of visual images have not kept pace with this paradigm shift as the continued identification of knowledge with language shows. Images represent an other mode of thinking. They bring new possibilities for imagining social and political change. Following Trinh T. Minh-Ha’s call to “challenge regimes of representation” as a “creative struggle” that is bound to “recompose subjectivity and praxis,” this paper explores the affordances of the process of creating image montages as analysis.

Suzanne Carlberg-Racich
DePaul University, Chicago, USA

Ethics in Photo-Based Research: Balancing human subjects’ protections and participant self-determination

Background: Photovoice offers the opportunity to combine scholarship with community engagement, focusing on the vision of the community to foster participant self-determination. This has particular value in offering stigmatized communities, such as people who inject drugs (PWID), a seat at the advocacy table that they may otherwise avoid for fear of legal repercussions. However, little is known about how PWID experience human subjects’ protections of their identity in the digital age. This study explored PWID perceptions of self-determination in Photovoice research.

Methods: PWID were recruited from urban areas with high rates of heroin use and fatal overdose, through a mobile syringe program. N=24 participants completed the Photovoice project and consented to qualitative, semi-structured interviews that explored their perceptions of the research process and human subjects’ protections. Following interviews, audio recordings were transcribed, coded using an open-coding process to create a Codebook, and then two analysts coded the interviews a
second time, using a Cohen’s Kapp to assess interrater reliability. Thematic analysis followed, and was done through a Self-Determination Theory lens to examine autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the process.

Results/Discussion: The majority of participants experienced some challenges to autonomy and competence from human subjects’ protections. However, many participants expressed appreciation for the protections. PWID addressed their competencies challenges, resulting in photos that were less organic but conceptually creative. Relatedness was not affected by the process or the human subjects’ protections, though this was likely affected by prolonged engagement. Recommendations for researchers engaging in Photovoice with stigmatized communities will be discussed.

Paulo Catrica
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Estacion Terrena
This paper aims to discuss a photographic project that I made at the Galapagos, questioning the complex relation between the symbolic projection of the archipelago natural environment against its socio economical or man altered landscape. The photographs, together with text – quotations and a set of small life stories collected at the archipelago, build a history of the human occupation of that territory.

As tourists in the Galápagos we experience a place where natural life seems to be in its full splendour. We fly or cruise by boat the archipelago, at times walking in organised field trips, accessing viewpoints where we can observe landscape and natural life from a safe distance. Our attraction relies on the reassurance that Galápagos could be on the verge of disappearance.

Made in locations outside the Galápagos National Park where conservation rules don’t apply, my photographs of the streets and houses of Puerto Ayora and Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, attempt to question the over-generalisations often made about the Galápagos. Concrete roads and pavements, street lamps and brick houses are important improvements to the standards of living and the well-being of the inhabitants of the Galápagos. However, the increase in the population of the archipelago presents a constant threat to its fragile ecosystem. All the materials that support human life have to be transported from mainland Ecuador, from water and food to the consumable goods necessary to sustain the tourism industry. All these contradictions seem to tell a story that we already know: the struggle to save the uniqueness of the Galápagos clashes with our Western way of life, how we occupy places, our inability to exist in harmony with nature. Converging on the idea that these pictures could challenge the ‘common’ perception that western people have on the Galápagos, while discuss the meaning of several environmental issues, such as how to inhabit and altered the landscape of a symbolic territory.

Sarawut Chutiwongpeti
Thailand

One to Another
The artwork focuses on personal and larger issues of cultural transformation related to global mobility and the precarious situation of the nomadic artist. In my installation I have incorporated packaging, mainly from food products, the artwork represents and symbolizes how things–and people– come together from around the world to be re-combined at one new location. The context and significance of the artwork for me is, first of all, highly personal, a mean to make connections between my native country and background and my present situation. The subject of the art work, however, also touches upon more general issues related to contemporary global mobility, everyday aesthetics and routines, and is thereby significant in terms of cultural transformation and the challenges of living and surviving for neo-nomadic artists.

Fiona Compton
London

The Revolution of the Fairytale
Everyday life shrinks into the mundane at every opportunity it finds. Repetitious tasks required for living can make us myopic and rob us of the insight into just how grand the human experience is on a greater scale. History is not exempt from this phenomenon, the sheer breath of the story often times begs us to homogenise it for more efficient telling. Of course there was a large and prolonged trade of enslaved Africans. Fullstop. Those people were dominated by Europe. Fullstop. Those people fought back, but it wasn’t enough. Fullstop. Those people failed to fight. Fullstop.

And on and on the story continues to shrink, until it literally becomes BLACK and WHITE.

This is why we tell stories. But even stories fall prey to the shrinking effect of time, the narratives are cut and curtailed to suit the powerful, the tales spread like viruses, seeming to give the host a beautiful anecdote or a properly recorded instance of history, when in fact we have been devastated by the influence of the stories shrunk beyond recognition.

This is why we re-tell stories.
The history that is slowly being uncovered, tells of entire worlds shrunk down to single words.


Every word evoking a pre-determined view, told on over and over until accepted by the majority on both sides. What better way then, to show there is more than what meets the eye, than to take the hyper familiar, and insert into it that, which was previously not considered to belong.

To take images engrained in our collective psyche in a very specific manner. Familiar. Safe. Constant. To replace them with something that is the opposite – at least to the majority.

If we had to re-tell a story of a girl swept up in a tornado of circumstance, who finds herself in a strange land ruled by an all powerful force, in a city the likes she had never seen. If we had to name the Lions stripped of their courage, to describe the ones who’s intellect was stolen and became like straw to time, the ones whose hearts were stolen by circumstance.

If we are to tell that story, or speak about how it plays out again and again and again in front of us – what would it look like? In the world as it is, it would surely look like any hidden truth that finds some light.

It would look like a Revolution

Glenn Doyle
Dublin City University,
School of Communications, Ireland

The Impact that contemporary attitudes towards the photographing of children is having upon the everyday practice of photographing and sharing Images of Children

Acknowledging the sensitivity towards the photographing of children within society, this research maps the shaping of contemporary attitudes towards the practice of photographing children and the changing habits concerning the sharing of images of children across both traditional and social mediated platforms. Despite the focusing being concerned with a practice of photography that is somewhat removed from published and publicly circulated images, the research takes cognizance of the previous work conducted within these arenas by Holland, Higonnet and Rose.

Considering key theoretical frameworks of meaning, interpretation and engagement with personal photographs of children, the research will provide an appropriate commentary upon an escalating discourse within contemporary society from an Irish perspective.

Using a mixed-method research methodology, the research will elicit sentiments and attitudes towards the photographing of children. Both online and offline surveys concerning the practice of capturing and sharing photographs of children have thus far yielded proportional responses, with the intention of screened responses being further engaged with using focus groups and semi-structured interviews.

Being an on-going work in progress, as part of my PhD, the research is concerned with any potential impact changes in attitudes will have, not just upon societal practices, but additionally upon photography and sharing as a normalized practice of documenting childhood.

The implications of this research are that a conscience may be awoken within society regarding contemporary attitudes towards the photographing of children and highlight any potential consequences said attitudes may have upon the area of concern.

Tiffany Fairey
Photography and the Archive Research Centre,
University of the Arts, London

Strengthening participatory photography as research method: reflecting on methodological limitations as well as potential

Participatory photography has become popular as a visual research method that promises to engage and ‘give voice’ to marginalised and hard to reach groups. Defined by its potential to ‘empower’, the literature on participatory photography tends towards idealistic and celebratory accounts that provide limited guidance for practitioners (Pauwels 2015). In order to enable academics and researchers to more fully harness the potential of participatory photography a critical re-evaluation of the method, that openly discusses its limitations alongside its potential, is required.

Framing participatory photography as an emergent and unstable action research methodology, this presentation considers its limits as an academic research tool and offers a framework for critically assessing its appropriate application and use. It is argued that a critical re-evaluation of participatory photography is essential to combat tokenistic use of the method and strengthen its practice as a research method.
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Images in the Post-Truth Era

Nuno Faleiro Rodrigues
Escola Superior Artística do Porto (ESAP), Portugal

Visual Truth and Digital Photography

The contradictory relation that contemporary society maintains with the notion of truth is condensed in the photographic image. The more digital photographs are, by their very nature, prone to manipulation and appropriation, the more they are used for surveillance, security and bureaucratic control. Certainly, this contradiction precedes the advent of the digital image as photography is perceived, since its inception, as inherently realistic, giving rise to a new form of visual deception. We would content, however, that the status of photography has changed in the digital era and, with it, its claims to objective veracity. From the standpoint of the digital image, the objectivity of analogue photography seems to be sustained through the connection between the technical apparatus and the human eye, even if the former is able to see what the latter cannot. The digital image highlights the canon of truth underpinning analogue photography: the photograph reproduces reality because the camera replicates the human eye which, in turn, is constructed like an optical machine. Ultimately, reality is captured through ocular vision. On the other hand, the images produced by the digital camera are not the end-product of a purely optical process, even if the digital replicates the fundamental principles of analogue photography, as it converts the light captured by the photo sensor into a numerical file. That is, the digital photograph short-circuits the identity established between the human eye and the camera, underscoring the constructed nature of visual objective truth, while highlighting the mental dimension of vision.

Monika Fischbein
Falmouth University, UK

National Identity: An ethnographic survey

Since 2014, my art practice has been preoccupied with the topic of national identity. I investigated my own sense of belonging via creating a photographic series, and then I extended the research to individuals and communities. Substantial amount of images and narratives were gathered from this expansion via the numerous workshops I have run in the UK and abroad. The project’s themes concentrated on the pictorial and textual interpretations of people’s feelings and experiences relating to their sense of national identities. These form an archive of portraits, illustrative and narrative explorations, which are linked to wider cultural, political, social meanings and understandings.

The project opened the topic up to further public engagement and widened project participation. I continued the dialogue by confronting the idea and purpose of the “nation-state”. This community outreach phase used photography with writing and applied the methodology of collective autoethnography. This project was funded by the Arts Council England and these ethnographical archives are the culmination of the above creative endeavours.

The project encourages deeper understanding of many modern socio-cultural issues. The objective is to be able to show a better understanding towards the varying dynamics relating to national identity as well as contemporary ways of researching and showing cross-discipline work with further involvement of various communities. It also provides an insight into contemporary issues and complexities affecting people’s characters today. Overall, it questions the nature of global frameworks and how we find our identities shaped by it in modern society.

Ana Gandum
CIC.digital/ FCSH – Nova University of Lisbon

‘Lembranças, Souvenirs, Recuerdos’: photo missives in-between Brazil and Portugal

As a temporal and mnemonic technology, photography was often analysed through either a realistic or a ‘barthesian’ perspective. In recent years, the medium’s importance on the construction of ‘post-memory’ has also been enhanced. Modern photography’s role in the emergence of ‘the’ instant also makes it a temporal device. A ‘realistic’ perspective of the medium would defend its capacity to freeze a moment located in the past. But at least since the publishing of Camera Lucida by Roland Barthes, photography is envisaged as a spectral medium of a ‘that has been’ – it tends to replace memory more than allowing remembrance to occur. Photographs have also been analysed as knowledge-power apparatus in the ‘creation’ of memories that don’t necessarily belong to oneself; post-memories, as defined by Marianne Hirsch. Turning his attention to the photographic act, the historian Mauricio Lissovsky defends that modern photography isn’t particularly ‘able’ to contain the past, arguing instead – here, explicitly inspired by the writings of Benjamin – that it points out to the future when aiming at make the ‘instant’ become (devenir).

Differently from those critical approaches, in this communication photographs belonging to Portuguese migrants in Brazil are put aside the etymology of the word ‘recordação’ (remembrance). We will argue that as a mean of communication at distance, photography is able to assemble a virtual time, to actually encamate more of a prospective memory than to transmit a past one.
Representations of exile in the Mediterranean: a process of commodification of humans and photographs

Following the Conference's stated objective to 'address and critically discuss the power struggles between the photographer and the photographed’, this paper explores current photographic representations of migrations by the Mediterranean.

Typologies of photographs produced by media allow extracting recurring motifs such as rubber boats, lifejackets or survival blankets which associate refugee to passivity and convey anxiety. Besides, an underlying motif to connect with a representation of human slavery that enhances Western hegemonic feeling (Goyal, 2014). Yet, a majority of migrants transiting by Libya is said to be subjected to human trafficking practices (IOM, 2016). From there, the power balance at stake regarding these representations seem to be disadvantageous exiles.

On their side, photographers appear to be affected by trading strategies fostered, in particular, by the collusion between the sphere of finance and media. As illustrated by the luxury industry’s appropriation of photographic motifs associated to the ‘migrants crisis’, a wider process of predation concerning visual signs and sensitive world itself is running (Le Brun, 2018). At a more subtle and perversive level, Western populations story-telling their lives on social media using intimate photographs, also seem to implicitly subscribe to a pervasive submission. This subjection extends to artists supposed to resist dominant discourses, as exemplified by the connivance between Chinese activist Ai Weiwei with world’s largest luxury-goods company.

A way-out might imply to set in motion imagination, and so critical thinking, by making use of an ‘aesthetics of disappearance’ (Ardenne, 2011) as demonstrated by Jacqueline Salmon’s photographs of a Sangatte's camp.

Photographic disruption and the movement of history: African kingdoms in the antechamber of colonialism, 1915

What happens to notions of historical reconstruction and chronological narrative in the writing of history, when text meets image, when writing meets the product of the camera? What are the diverse migrations that history takes as a result of the photograph? What happens to narrative construction itself? These questions arise for many historians and other writers when they encounter photographs that reference episodes central to their thinking and writing, and which - in the act of narrative reconstruction and analysis – confront them with something different and often difficult. As Edwards argues, photographs are ‘unlike other historical sources’ … ‘they are not linear’ (1998: 233). They organise space and time in highly specific ways. Often such photographs seem to have a splintering effect, with radial lines going out in different directions away from the cross-medial point where the image meets the text, and where the text seems to have been going in a certain direction. What would it mean to follow the lines of migration away from the point of narrative cohesion and go beyond its bounds? These questions are explored in relation to single photographs made by South African officials during the transition to colonial rule in an African kingdom on the border between Angola and Namibia during World War 1. Photographs offer a sense of contingency. As Hunt argues, ‘continuous linearity … misses layers, accidents, the uncertain, in a word, the aleatory – a concept that takes historical writing beyond necessity, in and through encounters, traces, and surprise’ (2016: 4).

Moving and stillness and the possibility of image

Photography is often seen as immanently and constitutively connected to stillness. Even the terms used to describe it often draw upon something of its static properties. Such that we look for photography to deliver a ‘decisive moment’ or to ‘freeze action’ from a constantly moving environment. In this sense, photographic images appear to come from circumstances which are somehow inconsistent with its stillness. Reading stillness as a particular symbolic incompleteness, would of course be eluded if all images moved. And where more obviously can this be seen that in the conflation of moving and still images already apparent and available in today’s smart phone camera features?

Understanding images in a way that does not relate to their particular subject matter, but instead draws upon their formal properties, we might conclude photography cuts across reality to acquire a form of stillness, one that suggests at the impossibility of image itself. Of course the reverse could also be true, wherein the ontological incompleteness of a stillled photograph characterises a certain struggle between the impossibility of reality in its representational form.

In this paper I claim any ontological limitations of still images can not be overhauled or rethought by contrasting the still image with moving images. Instead, image emerges at the intersection of these two: as one passes into the other and back again. The impossible properties of each form, their failure to be fully, either, moving or still, is therefore inscribed into the very possibility of image itself.
Beth Hodgett
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A Tale of Two Archives: The biography of the OGS Crawford Archives as a case study in movement and archival magnetism

Archaeologist OGS Crawford (1886-1957) is well-known for his pioneering use of aerial photography. The bulk of Crawford’s written papers (136 boxes) are held by the Bodleian Library; the papers are catalogued and stored in neatly ordered archival boxes, which are available through the Weston Library’s main reading room. In contrast, in the basement of the Archaeological Institute, stored in the tiny personal office of the Institute’s resident photographer, Crawford’s photographic archive comprises of 50 box files, the contents of which are “scarred by history”, “disassembled” and in “disarray” (Hauser 2008:x-xiv). This paper uses object biography and ethnography as a means of exploring the ongoing social life of Crawford’s photographic archive, taking clues from the material form of the archive in the present day to reconstruct the collection’s history. In doing so the paper reflects upon the power structures inherent in the archiving of photographs, the oral histories which photographs become entangled in within institutions, and how the spaces in which archives are held may influence researchers embodied experience of photography.

Dermot Hodson
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Trumped Up: Photography and Post-Truth Politics

Donald Trump’s presidency is profoundly controversial and this controversy has played out, in part, through the medium of photography. This paper explores the debate surrounding images of the 45th president, including the contested inauguration photos, the work of Chief Official White House Photographer Shealah Craighead and photographs of policy-making under the Trump administration. It asks what role photography has played in US presidential politics since 2017 and reflects on its relationship with post-truth politics more generally.

Lilyana Karadjova
National Academy of Art, Bulgaria

Photo archives and found photography in post-communist Bulgaria: traumatic memory and imagination

Over the past decades, Bulgarian photography has rediscovered its past outside the official archives of the communist regime, propaganda and censorship. Found photography in Bulgaria is an understudied, yet essential subject for the understanding of social processes and cultural history. This research paper argues that the newly collected photo archives reveal a large-scale process – society has started to accept the traumatic memories of the communist regime. Used as primary source material are several collections of found photography and predominantly the “Imaginary Archive” by Tihomir Stoyanov, presented at “Les Rencontres d’Arles” festival in 2017. The photo archives are analysed employing descriptive and contextual methods, and are interpreted within the conceptual framework of the "traumatic maps of memory". This complex concept is based on the relation between photographic images and memory images, as defined by Siegfried Kracauer, and refers to the concept of talisman photo by Joy Schaverien.

The paper argues that the emerging photo archives acquire specific social significance for several reasons. Firstly, they satisfy the necessity to fill the traumatic gaps in collective memory with acceptable images, unaffected by the repression. These vernacular photos represent the survival of personal autonomy, despite political repression. Furthermore, found vernacular photography can be seen as opposing propaganda’s dignified heroes by showing people’s authenticity. The artistic value of many found photos exceeds that of the popular communist images, which is of great importance for raising the profile of Bulgarian photographers. Ultimately, the paper contributes to historiography, revisionism and social analysis of Bulgarian photography.

Inessa Kouteinikova
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Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Changing lenses, processes and displays: “still image” then and now

In his expansive diary (1906-08), Baron Carl Gustav Mannerheim, the Finnish nobleman, Russian spy, military officer, ethnographer, and photographer, published over 1300 photographs from his expedition across Asia, from Turkestan to Beijing, many of which resembled the landscape of his native Finland, but which he identified as pertaining to the ancient Silk Road monuments along the route from Ashgabad to Kalgan. This article examines Mannerheim’s photographic reconfiguration of historical time and geographical space in the context of nature, archeology, ethnography and historiography in Russia’s Central Asia.
Systematic Problems of Visual Representations of “the Other” in International Journalism

As I used to work as a photojournalist in the U.S. and post-Soviet countries, I’m aware of the psychology of photographers trying to capture certain images that can be significantly biased. The system of visual publications by the major media is highly influenced by the market, competitions and politics, which narrow down the definitions of sellable, publishable and award-winning images that tend to look harsh, dramatic and aestheticized.

The mechanism echoes the theories of the media critics such as Jean Baudrillard and Edward Said. Moreover, a fundamental issue is that not only the audiences but also the editors in megaropoli in Europe or North America often have a difficulty checking the authenticity of visual materials and the process of their makings in so-called third world countries, though the popularity of the social networking sites around the world made dubious photojournalistic practice more difficult.

Yet, criticism of the visual representation of the Other remains relevant today, and journalism communities don’t often discuss this issue. As my video work demonstrates, photographic reality is very fragile, and bias, market demands and certain hierarchy of journalism communities can falsely determine the authenticity of events presented by photographers, encouraging other photographers to capture even harsher, more violent and dramatic scenes to gain recognition and resources to continue their career.

The narrative indicated in the video can seem one-sided, but the fundamental question being asked here is: what are the factors that let the media give a de-facto authenticity to the narrative provided through photographs?
Photography and Ethnography: from Tool to Method, from Data to Meta-data

Social scientists often do photography to take visual-notes during their fieldwork. This paper, however, aims to show that photography is not merely a technical skill to operate the camera and process analogue or digital visual data. The modern/digital photography can produce meaningful spatial meta-data, revealing that photography is a body performance. Namely, this paper is aimed at exploring the phenomenology of photography, not photographs.

The discussion is unfolded based on my participatory fieldwork in the annual religious processions of Muharram throughout the city of Mumbai, when I attached a GPS receiver to my camera. I used this technique just to geotag photographs. However, I then realised that I recorded meaningful meta-data that captured my photographic behaviour and body performance. Mapping thousands photographs also shows the geographical pattern of emotion throughout the processions, since I simply took more pictures in emotional time-space and less when the processions were emotionally calmer. Based on this experience, this paper formulates photography as an intuitive body performance throughout the city. If photography is approached as an integrated part of fieldwork repertoire, it helps social scientists to deeply engage, comprehend, and capture a complex social practice like religious rituals. By exploring this idea in the time of modern photography, I shall explain that photography does not merely produce the trace of past events, as Barthes suggested. It has also the ability to capture the trace of photographers’ performance and body movement, illustrating that photography is indeed a complex body performance.
Akanksha Mehta  
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Visualizing Narratives of Settler Colonialism: ‘Capturing’ Everyday Politics of Zionist Women in the West Bank through Images

The Zionist settler movement in the West Bank, Palestine sees significant participation from women, who espouse its exclusionary and violent settler colonial politics while at the same time contesting its everyday patriarchy. Women in the movement mobilize in the everyday through practices of pedagogy, ‘charity’, leisure, friendship and intimacy, as well as physical violence, challenging male formulated discourses and creating new identities and subjectivities of ‘frontier women’ and ‘political activists.’ Dominant analyses of settler women’s politics employ agency and empowerment frameworks that ignore the complicated and intricate everyday politics of Zionist women, labeling them as ‘difficult’ women that are merely symbolic markers and pawns of patriarchy. This paper uses imagery and visual material collected and co-created during ethnographic fieldwork with Zionist settler women in the Southern West Bank to examine their everyday politics and to question the aforementioned discussions around agency of violent and ‘deviant’ right-wing women. Using images (still and moving), this paper argues that visual narratives enable the capturing of the gendered nuances and intricacies of everyday settler colonial politics and women’s mobilizations. It also asserts that the usage of visual domains to write history and politics is crucial to discussions around methods, methodologies, and the ethics of feminist knowledge production in contemporary political times.

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Photography as Border, the ‘Refugee Crisis,’ and the Rise of the Alt-Right

The current ‘refugee crisis’ in Europe has generated an abundance of photographs that have circulated in print and digital media since 2015. The majority of these photographs have perpetuated stereotypical representations of refugees as either helpless victims or threatening subjects. Nationalist-populist and far-right political parties’ campaigns in Europe have increasingly made effective use of photographs in order to portray refugees as a threat to EU member states’ economic and social prosperity. Jeffrey Mitchell’s photograph of refugees walking along the Croatian-Slovenian border (2015), used by the UK Independence Party (UKIP) in their pro-Brexit campaign (2016), is an indicative example. Starting with analysis of the pro-Brexit UKIP campaign’s poster and the widely reproduced photograph of UKIP’s leader, Nigel Farage, posing in front of it, this paper examines the ways in which recent EU member state far-right political campaigns have used photography to promote discriminatory agendas and to argue for the implementation and strengthening of xenophobic policies and intensified national security measures. The paper argues that UKIP’s campaign poster should be understood as a notable part of a wider regime of imagery, written texts and other discursive formations that generate and sustain the distinctions between the legal and ‘desirable’ citizen and the ‘undesirable’ ‘non-citizen.’ Further, it maintains that the ways in which ‘the individual’ and ‘the crowd’ were framed in the 2016 EU Referendum campaigning have resulted in a reinforcement of the ubiquity and dislocation of the border. Finally, the paper asks how photographs can be used to challenge dominant and uncontested visual narratives of the ‘refugee crisis’, and even, support both organised and individual actions by the public that seek to challenge and counter such right-wing narratives around migration.

Nela Milic  
The University of Arts, UK

Radical artefacts

The Serbian upraising in ‘96/’97 was an attempt to overthrow dictatorship of president Milosevic after he annulled elections because of the victory of the opposition party. Ashamed by the unsuccessful outcome of their protest, the people of the capital Belgrade, where number of protesters reached 200,000 daily, have never produced an archive of photographs, banners and graffiti, which emerged during these demonstrations. Scarce information on the Internet and the inability of the media to reveal the data gathered during the protest has left the public without the full account of the uprising. My project is that archive - the website of images, leaflets, badges, flags, vouchers, cartoons, crochets, poems etc, an online record of the elucidated protest.

The narratives of this event have been locked within the community and there are only odd visual references hidden in people’s houses. My research generated them through interviews and image elicitation that looks at the uprising by analysing the accumulated historic relics. Presented in sections on the website (dates, artists, routes) and pages of art formats (poems, photos, badges), this overview of the geographical, political and social circumstances within which the protest’s artwork was produced demonstrates how it influenced the actions of the citizens.

This online package for capturing the past (hi)stories shifts the official narratives into only one possibility among others. It captures the failed revolution in Serbia under Milosevic since its beginnings, revealing the accomplishments of the academics, artists and citizens buried under the war stories.
Luc Pauwels  
Dept of Communication Studies  
University of Antwerp, Belgium

Globalization Exposed: Photographic Approaches to Researching Interconnectivity in the Urban Everyday

This presentation proposes to interrogate the visual dimensions of globalization processes as expressed in material culture elements of a varied nature, as well as through visible and recordable aspects of human behavior in urban public spaces. It aims to enrich and complement the more abstract discourse of globalization and transnationalism with methods to produce empirically grounded insights regarding concrete expressions and enactments of cultural encounters in urban contexts. A study of the globalization as experienced in the everyday should definitely comprise aspects that are not pre-mediated by mass media (behavior in public spaces, ‘grassroots expressions’ such as graffiti and other signs of resistance or appropriation). Such a view ‘on the ground and in the open’ may finally complement the dominant more narrow mass media focused and quantitative discourses on globalization.

Visual methods and techniques may take on a more central - though not exclusive role - in the effort to shed light on some unexplored and underexposed avenues of globalization and cultural exchange by focusing on the key roles played by city dwellers, urban planners, designers, advertisers, commercial forces, cultural institutions, local authorities, tourists, artists, protesters etc. as social agents in the (re)production of these cultural processes on a day to day basis. Visual approaches to globalization and cultural exchanges may provide more valid, unobtrusive ways to assess and understand the impact of culture and cultural exchange in the daily life of inhabitants of cities around the world and add a unique ‘localized’, cross-cultural empirical perspective to the many divergent views and discussions about the presumed beneficial or detrimental nature of these processes.

Cláudio Reis  
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Trough the looking glass, the par-action of the photographic in Instagram

Considering the extent to which dubious informational content has thrived throughout social media streams in the current post-truth climate, the phenomenon of photography sharing denotes its own changing patterns in the creation and reception of the photographic image. Rethinking the status of the personal photograph in social media, the research focuses on a series of designers and artists who have successfully constructed a personal universe for others to follow in Instagram, unravelling the underlying conceptual and stylistic mechanisms of make-believe.

Research findings suggest the alignment of photography sharing with the principles of para ction, whose practitioners enact dialectics of disbelief in an attempt to play with collective memory and question its reliance on the objectivity of images. Significantly, in Instagram the visual aesthetics of deception seem to take precedence over the formulation of narrative, the sequencing of photographs demonstrating the extent to which the performative self and its contextual boundaries are culturally coded for the spatial dynamics of mobile devices and the spec-cities of the user interface.

By transposing the mechanics of par-action, as theorized by art historian Carrie Lambert-Beatty, into the erosion of authenticity as practiced by a selection of case studies in everyday photography sharing, the research furthers the insight on the changing value of photography in social media, neither true, nor not-true, a symptom of the cultural dynamics currently at play across digital media, recently described by media theorist Lev Manovich as being the visible manifestation of aesthetic workers, operating in an aesthetic society.

Teresa Retzer  
Amsterdam, Nederland

The significance of the photographic image in a data-based reality

As soon as archived images occur in form of digital data, the idea of the archive as a physical gathering point of all sort of objects from the past is turned upside down. While in the era of predominantly physical archives, images were “fixed, digital data consists of endless files containing numbers which represent the details of any kind of information”. Beside the distinction between the ontological status of physical images and digital data, an even more important difference is that ‘digital media’ is no longer used to investigate the past but rather to build up the future.

Hito Steyerls films Factory of the Sun (2015) and HellYeahWeFuckDie (2017) point out the respective significance of data that every individual produces by any kind of action that can be electronically recorded. The achievement of data-driven economies results in the climax of capitalism at the cost of the individual. In fact, humans have become the product of a consumer-driven everyday life, the consuming of today anticipates the needs of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow and so forth.
Marcel Reyes-Cortez  
Artist and Social Researcher  
London

The Sociomythic Portrait: Extending the bonds between the living and the dead

My current visual ethnographic research aims to extend further my study of the visual and material culture dedicated to the dead, along with the agency of objects and commemorative portraits commemorating them.

The objectification of a person after death through the photographic portrait is a good example of material culture shifting from the corporeal to the incorporeal. Photographic portraits of remembrance take on other manifestations for the people that revere them. Photographs are no longer treated as inanimate objects as they are embedded with social, economic and ideological values but also, I suggest, each with a human and spiritual life of their own; the sociomythic portrait.

In this paper I briefly address the question of why and how people have developed extended relationships with their dead and taken a wide variety of objects, particularly the photographic portrait, to cemeteries and alternative private and public spaces dedicated to the dead.

From this I reflect on the question and the suggestion that many cultural systems concerned with death and the dead do not rely on abstract terms and are constructed to give a voice to the dead. Photography is a tool well suited in representing historical events but also a persons’ life trajectory and therefore can provide the living with the links of how the world was in time and space. From this I suggest that there is contiguity between the event and the traces left by a person. Rosalind Krauss brings to light the challenges that arise around these traces, fundamental to understanding the struggles that exist in time, memory and nature, ‘which all conspire to erase the traces’ left by the living. Material objects and in this case the sociomythic portrait assist the living in tackling this issue as the materiality of objects and the body of the photograph can outlive the flesh.

Carlos Reyes-Manzo  
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The ideology behind a portrait

Images have always been at the centre of human evolution. What we imagine, see or not see is constructed according to our ideology within a social parameter. Images as languages represent a historical time in societal relations.

Images allow us to interrogate and create a world that tends to appear or disappear with or without the materiality of the image. The images that surround us are a copy of what we believe. Images make us trust in the reality or unreality of our social environment.

The most pervasive images that we see in the media, and in private or public spaces are portraits, portraits of people across time and space, or portraits of people who for ideological reasons we either like or dislike.

I will discuss the ideological transformation of a portrait of Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero I took in 1979 in San Salvador. Archbishop Romero was murdered by the Army of El Salvador on 24 March 1980 to stop him from denouncing human rights crimes against humanity, and to stop him from fighting against social injustice and discrimination based on ethnicity, poverty and capitals.

Joe Ruckli  
Queensland College of Art  
Griffith University, Australia

The Invisible Wound: Re-Imaging the Medicalised Body

This paper seeks to explicate key aspects of my practice-led research, illuminating the lived experience of the contemporary medical encounter through documentary practice. The intention of this research is to contribute to this discourse in aesthetic and affective terms and in doing so, attempts to redress the textual hegemony that underpins our primary understandings of end-of-life experiences. The research photographically explores what it means and how it feels to live a life disrupted by illness and subsequently dominated by medicine.

The medical subject is an enduring theme within art history tracking forward into popular visual culture. Our televisions flicker with scenes of heroic doctors and headlines of miracle breakthroughs, scandals and spectacles. But beyond the screen and within the closed walls of the hospital are quieter voices that slowly fade as the fluorescent lights shine bright. Dying is no doubt deeply profound but also lonely. Bureaucratic. Banal. This research privileges and preserves these voices through immersive long-form ethnographic storytelling within a palliative care ward.
Bifurcating the end-of-life phenomena is a second suite of stories outside the institutional setting. It offers glimpses into the lives of chronically and terminally ill participants and their desires and struggles for a dignified death given the absence of voluntary assisted dying laws in all but one Australian state. The project attempts to index and make visible the overlooked challenges and collateral consequences of those wishes denied, and experiment with strategies that blend evidentiary and interpretive visual language in order to access audience concern and empathy.

Liga Sakse
Latvian Academy of Culture, Latvia

The Still Life image in a world of a movement

In the paper theoretical and empirical data gathered in the framework of research, that presents an archetypes of a time, aging process and mobilization. The article presents a case study of still life photography works, using a mixed-methods approach to analyze the cultural background and individual attitudes of artists. The research investigates the impact of the idea of the memento mori (latin, - remember that you have to die) through focusing on Michael Wesely (b.1963) works from “Open Shutter Project” Stilleben 2001-2007 while time itself becomes visible on the image. The plants represented in the form of still life communicates with the greater modulation than in nature itself. Flowers in the Japanese Kenji Shibata (b.1972) works from photo series Locked in the Ether (2014) are literally frozen in time for the purpose to preserved the beauty in the ice. What we observe in the artworks is both: the reality and attraction to things that fade context. The findings may be useful in describing how the technological innovations will influence the future of still life images.

Toyoko Sato
Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

Flashing up the ethos and discourse: A critical distance on the works of Seiji Kurata

Seiji Kurata is a Japanese photographer who emerged in the 1970s. With his medium format camera and strobe flash, Kurata crafted the street photo genre of Japan. The subjects of his works have been people, both anonymous and celebrity, as well as sceneries from urban construction sites. Although he studied in the Daido Moriyama Workshop in his beginning photographic career, Kurata even by then, it is said, already had his own style, which impresses observers with his expressive fierceness and compelling psychological grip. These fierceness and grip are connected to something, which I call positioned estrangement. Kurata works this out in a stance against the world of photographic humanitarianism.

Seeing his works as photographic ethnographies, my questions go to the meaning of the positioned estrangement: how can the balance between the photographer (Kurata) and the photographed (his subjects) be understood? Is the photographed actually his subject or object? How is the power of his photographs contested by viewers? Through a critical visual discourse analysis, I attempt to shed light on the aesthetic strategies and manifested ethos of Seiji Kurata’s positioned estrangement.

Kimberly Schreiber
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The Black Image and the Myth of Post-Truth

Following the murder of Michael Brown in 2014, 'hands up, don't shoot' became a critical mantra for those resisting the casual violences of the police state. The phrase was borne out of witness' claims that Brown raised his arms to surrender when he was shot by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. In his grand jury testimony, Officer Darren Wilson reported the events differently, saying that the pair had gotten into an altercation during which the officer 'felt like a 5-year-old holding onto Hulk Hogan.' For protestors, the black body is a site of vulnerability, while for police officers, it is a supernatural threat. These divergent accounts ask us to see racialised bodies differently, illuminating the way in which the politics of vision are always imbricated in the mediated exchanges between race and knowledge.

By investigating the way in which black bodies are always contested sights of meaning, this paper will harness the history of photography to historicize the example of Michael Brown. This paper will focus on two examples: the appropriation of pro-lynching photographs by anti-lynching activists in the 1930s; and the conflicting uses of Angela Davis' likeness in the 1970s by the FBI and 'Free Angela' campaigns. In looking historically at the way in which photographs negotiate a productive intersection between race and meaning, this paper will assert that images of racialized bodies have always posed a quagmire to regimes of objectivity and therefore have always been beyond or against 'truth.'

Miki Soejima
UK/Japan

Mrs. Merryman’s Collection Presented by Anne Sophie Merryman

Mrs. Merryman’s Collection is a fiction. It consists of fabricated old postcards collected by an imaginary person: Anne-Marie Merryman. In the story, her granddaughter, Anne Sophie Merryman, has inherited the collection and presents it to the public. A
professional actor plays her character. The viewer is not informed that the whole story, characters and objects are fabricated, but they can find out through a series of hints placed on the postcards, and in a message hidden at the end of the book.

The work evokes a persona through a collection of images; and at the same time looks at the relationship between author and audience, revealing the persuasive nature of photography, which can lead us to believe in certain narratives.

Although all the photographs have been taken by the artist (myself), Mrs. Merryman’s Collection is presented as a collection of found and anonymous images. The viewer is set free from the presence of an author and can relate to the images without seeking the author’s intentions.

The work looks at how the context might dramatically change the way we perceive photographic images, reflection on the way we consume stories and images. It seeks to question the process that drives us to believe in something, and points toward the presence of authorial (and authoritative) figures who influence such a course.

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The television news studio as starship: Aesthetics technologies of simulation and dissimulation of distance

Television news studios are often taken for granted in news broadcast, but these studios from which reports on everyday life are made are anything but ordinary. What influence does this aesthetics have on the studio’s subject, the news? In this paper I will investigate multiple visual aesthetic technologies of television news studios through three studiomatic orders. off/off: when the studio is in stand-by mode. On/off: when the broadcast is being recorded but yet to reach the viewer’s screen (the live). On/on: when the studio is framed by the viewer’s screen. Through these orders I will analyse an element of the television news studio in each chapter, such as the news desk, autocue and LED-lights. These elements phrase the semiotics of the television news studio; as well as it’s influences and the corresponding problems it has to deal with. These elements fall into the code of ‘starship’ aesthetics, which regards the simultaneous simulation and dissimulation of distance in a sterile, space while being confronted with its own alienation from ‘the new’.

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How can critical photographic practice be used to confront and question dominant ideological representations of family and establish alternative narrative?

We each have an intimate understanding of family, but outside of personal experience our concept of ‘what family looks like’ generally conforms to the dominant ideal of family—heterosexual, two-parent, married with children. Photography and visual culture contribute to the prevalence of this ideological image throughout the western world, influencing our beliefs and attitudes via the various forms of media we consume in our daily lives. The question guiding this research is therefore; how can critical photographic practice be used to confront and question dominant ideological representations of family and establish alternative narratives? Employing a methodology of critical arts-based practice and building on feminist theory which establishes the family as a socially constructed institution, this research critically examines the mechanisms of power associated with the dominance of the ideal/standard family and aims to represent alternative narratives from outside of the normative meanings and understandings of what constitutes a legitimate ‘family’. Due to the scope of this project father absent families are chosen as a case study in alternative experiences, highlighting the ways in which existing representations serve to both enforce norms and ‘other’ this common form of family. Disseminating the work photographically enables the work to be shared with audiences outside of academia, resulting in a body of work which is uniquely accessible to the public. This research has significance to families which deviate from the standard ideology and contributes toward the ongoing visibility of diverse family forms and progressive change in discourse, both socially and politically surrounding family.