Journal of European Studies: Europe in Photography Today

Deadline: May 31, 2016

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Call for Essays

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Over the past fifteen years, there has been an explosion of writing on photography that has left behind the long tradition and influence of the work of Susan Sontag and Roland Barthes, work that dominated the field of photography criticism for decades. No longer is photography a static object whose meaning is aesthetically determined. Most provocatively, building on the important developments made by writers such as Abigail Solomon-Godeau, Allan Sekula and Martha Roesler, Ariella Azoulay's landmark The Civil Contract of Photography set in motion a shift in photography studies towards a conception of the photograph that sees it as a collaboration between the photographed, the photographer, and the camera. In turn, the photograph is brought to life and given meaning through interaction with a spectator. Together with, and after Azoulay, critics such as T J Demos, Susie Linfield and John Roberts have continued to examine the social consequences of photography, and to identify its use to resist and counter systems of power. Beyond visual studies, historians, anthropologists, sociologists and scholars in multiple other disciplines have critically examined photographs to create new perspectives on the past, present and future, of diverse places and peoples.

As a result of the work of such scholars, the field has continued to open up to the radical social and political possibilities of photography. In particular, critics are keen to identify photography's power to resist and counter sovereign violence through active engagement with global struggles, and to become involved in the development of civilian society in its broadest sense. Today, photography--in its moving and still, analogue and digital, official and amateur variations--is recognized as the medium that most responsibly imagines current political, ideological and cultural states and transformations through active interaction.

Hand in hand with the opening up of photography and its attendant scholarship, Europe has continued to be redefined since the establishment of the European Union in the 1990s. Over 25 years, Europe's identity has transformed in every way: geographically, culturally, economically, socially and politically. Borders have been redrawn, the physical landscape has been redefined, and European identities from community, through regional to national levels have continued to reformulate. Beyond Europe, the fallout of globalization, climate change and ecological disasters, as well as the rise of technology, war and changing patterns of migration, have also impacted the borders and identities of Europe.

This special issue of Journal of European Studies is devoted to the merging of the constantly changing concerns of both Europe and photography. It asks the question of where and how the two, Europe and photography, coincide today. The articles will address a small, but urgent, set of issues as they are witnessed by key “European” photographers.
We welcome contributions that address topics that include, but are by no means limited to:

- the social devastation resulting from post-industrial transformation;
- new figurations of race in the everyday;
- the on going impact of migration and movement on and across borders;
- geographical displacement/demographic change;
- the clash of cultures, especially those leading to exclusion from the public arena;
- climate change and energy supply;
- the heightened threat of terrorism;
- a resurgent Russia;
- war in the Middle East.

Please send inquiries, and/or 400-500 word abstract, a one to two page CV to:
Frances Guerin: fjguerin@gmail.com

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Full essay of 5,000-7,000 words due: April 30, 2017
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