Reframing Family Photography (Toronto, 28-30 Sep 17)

Toronto ON, Canada, Sep 28–30, 2017
Deadline: Sep 1, 2016

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Reframing Family Photography

University of Toronto, Canada
A conference hosted by the Toronto Photography Seminar

What is family photography? Scholars have often understood the genre as simply snapshots of domestic scenes—images that reflect and produce normative notions of family. Yet, family photographs are more complex than we think: they can also include images taken by a wide spectrum of producers, including the press and the state; they frequently circulate between private and public spheres, linking personal memories with national and even global histories; and, just as importantly, they don't just illustrate families, but also shape the very idea of family, as racialized and gendered social structures. Foundational thinkers including Roland Barthes, Pierre Bourdieu, Jo Spence, Marianne Hirsch, Martha Langford, Deborah Willis, and others, have offered influential terms for investigating family photographs, respectively, as: an affective punctum; middlebrow art; means of reinforcing domestic ideology; conduit for postmemory; integrally linked to orality; a form of resistance; and at the heart of identity formation.

This conference will re-examine the genre and develop new ways of investigating the cultural politics of family photography. This critical task is all the more timely not just because of photography's transformation with the digital turn, but also because of recent historical shifts that have altered the composition and very meaning of kinship--including Cold War dislocations, the visibility of queer and trans* family belonging, transnational adoptions, and immigration under the auspices of family reunification.

We are seeking papers that critically reframe family photography in light of these historical shifts. To what extent do domestic images confirm or contest official discourses of racial, sexual, and gender diversity? How do family photos produce 'the family' and function as one of the many technologies of the self? How do family photographs offer a counter-archive of normative modes of kinship? What problems do orphan images—photographs that lack context—pose for interpretation, and what methods might we develop to understand their significance? How might the reproduction and circulation of family photos, or their loss due to sudden or violent dislocation, help connect and constitute diasporic communities? How has the digital turn altered the look and meaning of family photographs? How might we situate family photography within the history of photography more generally? What are the implications for the recent interest in institutional col-

lecting of family photos? How have contemporary artists contributed to new ways of understanding family photography? These are just some of the key questions that this international conference on REFRAMING FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHY will explore.

Confirmed speakers include:
Tina Campt (Barnard College)
Nicole Fleetwood (Rutgers University)
Richard Hill (Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Studies, Emily Carr University of Art and Design)
Marianne Hirsch (Columbia University)
Martha Langford (Concordia University)
Laura Wexler (Yale University)
Deborah Willis (NYU)

Deadlines: Please submit a 300 word abstract and a 1-page CV by September 1st, 2016.
For more information, please contact: info@torontophotographyseminar.org

Schedule
September 1st, 2016: 300-word abstract and a 1-page CV.
October 30 2016: The selection committee will notify applicants of its decision.
September 1st, 2017: Drafts of 10-page papers to be submitted to discussants.
September 28th-30th, 2017: Conference.

Reference:
CFP: Reframing Family Photography (Toronto, 28-30 Sep 17). In: ArtHist.net, Jun 9, 2016 (accessed Nov 19, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/13221>.