

Photography in the history of the immigration (Bergen, 5-6 Mar 18)

University of Bergen, Norway, Mar 5–06, 2018

Deadline: Jan 15, 2018

Sigrid Lien

Workshop: Exploring photography in the history of the immigration to the USA

Photography has been one of the formative ways through which cultural encounters have been visually mediated over time and across different geographical locations. The mass reproducibility and simultaneous distribution of photographic imagery allows individuals to both experience other cultures and to maintain, establish and articulate cultural bonds, form imagined communities, and share cultural experiences across and between nations. However, in the relatively few publications that see migration and photography in a broader, transnational perspective, attention has mainly been directed toward iconic works by canonized heroes of immigrant photographers such as André Kertész, Brassai, Man Ray, and Jacob Riis. There have few studies that approach migration photography by accounting for its social, cultural and political contexts. One example is Carol Williams's research on photography's role in the British colonization of the Canadian Northwest coast (2003), where she argues that photography contributed to constructing cultural and racial difference between settlers and Native Americans. Other examples are Anna Pegler-Gordon's *In Sight of America* (2009), which demonstrates how photography shaped the development of immigration policy in the United States, and Anthony W. Lee's *A Shoemaker's Story* (2008), a complex historic narrative which includes addresses issues such as the industrialization of New England, the uses of immigrant-labour and the local rise of photography as a profession.

The workshop Exploring photography in the history of the immigration to the USA aims at taking this discussion further, with a particular focus on "the work" photography is doing in culture. It attempts to establish an understanding of the role of photographs in the many small narratives that make up the history of the migration to the USA from the 1850s-1980. It may thus be thought of as a contribution or a piece to a greater, transnational, migration-historical jigsaw puzzle that is as yet barely begun.

We therefore invite papers which will:

- Explore the culturally differentiated uses and signifying practices of everyday photographic materials and technologies in migrant communities
- Examines the use of photography by migrant communities in America to mediate cultural dislocation both from their homeland and/or globally dispersed relations, and the nations, communities and places in which they have 'settled' or 'temporarily reside'.
- Attempt to understand the role of photography in evidencing the social upheavals, frictions and longings of migratory cultural experiences, and in shaping new identities in America.

A 500-word proposal and a curriculum vitae (including email address) should be received by the organizers by January 15, 2018. Please write your name and affiliated institution (if any) at the top of your proposal. The proposal and CV should be sent as attachments to an email sent to Sigrid Lien at Sigrid.Lien@no. Your participation will be confirmed by February 1, 2018.

The workshop is organized by the project "Photography as Contact Zones: Migration and Cultural Encounters in America", managed by Dr. Justin Carville (Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Dún Laoghaire, Dublin, in collaboration with professor Sigrid Lien, University of Bergen, Norway. The project is sponsored by Terra Foundation for American Art.

Questions may be addressed to Justin.Carville@iadt.ie

Reference:

CFP: Photography in the history of the immigration (Bergen, 5-6 Mar 18). In: ArtHist.net, Dec 5, 2017 (accessed Dec 20, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/16906>>.