

Photo Archives VII: The Majority World (Florence, 24–25 Oct 19)

Florence, Villa La Pietra, Oct 24–25, 2019

Deadline: Jan 7, 2019

Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz - Max-Planck-Institut

Photo Archives VII: The Majority World

Conference organized by Akkasah, the Center for Photography at New York University Abu Dhabi, in collaboration with the Photothek of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz - Max-Planck-Institut

1. Outline

The archive has become an object of sustained historical and theoretical investigation in recent years. The anthropological turn in photographic criticism has opened up new directions for the analysis and understanding of photo archives that compliment and dialogue with more traditional Art Historical approaches focused on photographs as images; it has helped direct this growing interest towards the materiality of the photograph as object, and its social and institutional lives that unfold very often within the archival ecosystem. At the same time, an ever-increasing number of scholars, artists and curators are addressing the neglected histories and practices of photography beyond the borders of Europe and North America. This conference aims to build upon these developments and reorientations, and to attend to issues of critical importance for photo archives from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and Oceania—from the part of the world that Bangladeshi photographer Shahidul Alam has so aptly referred to as the "majority world." The conference will be the seventh in the series "Photo Archives," a series that helped over a number of years to establish an international network of photo archive scholars and archive professionals, and to stimulate a dialogue between academics and archivists.

We invite in particular papers that engage with the historical, social, institutional and theoretical aspects of photo archives in conceptually and critically innovative ways, and that move beyond primarily descriptive accounts of the evolution or contents of particular archives, or a restricted preoccupation with archiving technologies and procedures. Both focused case studies and papers of broader theoretical and cultural scope are encouraged as are diversity of critical approaches and disciplinary range. We hope the conference will provide a meeting place for a truly international community for individuals and institutions committed not only to a better understanding of photo archives, but to exploring their epistemological potentials and to developing international dialogues and strategies that can ensure sustainable and creative futures for these archives.

Among the topics and questions of interest to the conference are:

- The usefulness of current discourses about photo archives and about photography when thinking about photo archives of the majority world: are existing definitions of and ways of understanding photo archives helpful or restrictive; do local histories and experiences suggest other ways of thinking and working?
- The making of a photo archive: pre-archival moments of a photograph; processes of institutionalization; potential archives; invisible "non-collections" (E. Edwards) in institutions; the different agencies in the making of a photo archive.
- The differences and relationships between public and the private forms of collection (esp. family photographs), and between an archive and a collection. A consideration of these differences and relationships opens up a range of issues, including the incorporation of family or studio collections in national or international archives, and, with the increased privatization of many collections and the rise in state restrictions, the problem of accessibility.
- The ethics and politics of the use of photo archives by contemporary artists: to what extent does the common practice of "ironic archivization" open up new critical insights and to what extent is it itself a form of appropriation?
- Many of the archives of the majority world are physically located within the borders of the minority world of western Europe and North America; these archives are inevitably shaped by the intellectual and institutional concerns specific to the dominant cultures of these locations, and they can often draw upon resources unavailable to archives in the majority world: how does this situation affect what is seen and what isn't, which images circulate and which don't?; how might we think of 'decolonizing' this situation?
- How does the location of a photograph or a group of photographs within the larger context of an archive, the mobility of a photograph between institutions or within the classification system of an archive, change its meanings or its intellectual, social or commercial value?
- How has the growing mobility of photographs between the analog and the digital format and the rise of social media shaped our understanding of the photo archive? How is the rhetoric of digitalization affecting the strategies of photo archives in our contemporary societies?
- Are there archives or archival practices that move us beyond the projects of cultural and national heritage and preservation towards new kinds of understanding or towards social change? Can archives challenge rather than merely support national or other collective narratives?
- How can we critically deal with the idea that photo archives are themselves part of the cultural heritage on the background of current criticism of the concept of 'world' heritage? Whose heritage are photo archives of the majority world?
What strategies and practices might we develop to foster greater exchange and collaboration among the photo archives of the majority world?
- Suggestions for other topics and concerns are welcome. Submissions are welcome not only from academics but also from archivists and artists.

2. Submission process

Please submit title and abstract of your proposed paper (300 words) as well as a one-page CV to the conference organizers via the following link: <http://bit.ly/MajorityWorld>

Deadline for submission: 7 January 2019

Notification about the acceptance of papers: 31 January 2019

3. Financial assistance for participants

Financial assistance towards travel and accommodation is available. Priority will be given to participants traveling from outside Europe and North America. If you have institutional support available to you, we would be grateful if you could apply for this first. If you require financial assistance, we will ask you to indicate this when your paper is accepted.

4. Organization

The conference is funded by Akkasah, the Center for Photography at New York University Abu Dhabi, and co-organized by Akkasah and the Photothek of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz.

Akkasah was established in 2014 and is home to an archive of the photographic heritage of the Middle East and North Africa. The Center is dedicated to documenting and preserving the diverse histories and practices of photography from the region, and its growing archive contains at present over 60,000 images. Akkasah undertakes and supports research on Middle Eastern and North African photography, as well as on cross-cultural and transnational aspects of photography, through conferences, colloquia and publications, and through the research fellowship program of the NYUAD Institute. It also commissions new documentary projects from contemporary photographers that are archived alongside the Center's historical collections, and it is establishing a special collection of photographic albums, as well as of original photobooks from around the world. (For more, see: <http://akkasah.org/>)

The Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz is one of the oldest research institutions dedicated to the History of Art and Architecture in Italy, where facets of European, Mediterranean and global history are investigated. Founded in 1897, it has been under the auspices of the Max Planck Society (<https://www.mpg.de/en>) since 2002. Its resources include a specialized library and one of the most wide-ranging photographic libraries on Italian art. Besides the preservation and expansion of its holdings the Photothek has established itself as an international research center on archives and photography, focused upon photographs as material objects. It has, since 2009, developed the "Photo Archives" conference series in collaboration with partner institutions, an open-ended series of international conferences, dedicated to photo archives and the reciprocity and interaction between photographic records and academic disciplines. The present conference will be the seventh in the series. (For more on the Institute, see: <http://www.khi.fi.it/>; for more on the "Photo Archives" series with meetings held in London, Florence, New York, Los Angeles and Oxford: http://www.khi.fi.it/4831050/photo_archives).

We are pleased to collaborate with Villa La Pietra which will host the conference. La Pietra is a

renaissance villa in the hills outside Florence, in Tuscany in central Italy. It was formerly the home of Arthur Acton and later of his son Harold Acton, on whose death in 1994 it was bequeathed to New York University. The villa is now home to NYU Florence. (See: <https://lapietra.nyu.edu/>)

Co-Organizers:

Shamoon Zamir

Professor of Literature and Visual Studies, Director of Akkasah: Center for Photography at New York University Abu Dhabi

Costanza Caraffa

Director of the Photothek, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz - Max-Planck-Institut

Advisory Panel:

Özge Calafato, Project Manager, Akkasah: Center for Photography at New York University Abu Dhabi, Zeynep D. Gürsel, Associate Professor of International Studies, Macalester College, Rosalind Morris, Professor of Anthropology, Columbia University, Issam Nassar, Professor of History, Illinois State University

FURTHER INFORMATION

Web: <http://www.khi.fi.it>

Newsletter: <http://www.khi.fi.it/newsletter>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/khiflorenz>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/khiflorenz>

Video: <https://vimeo.com/khiflorenz>

Reference:

CFP: Photo Archives VII: The Majority World (Florence, 24–25 Oct 19). In: Arthist.net, Oct 31, 2018 (accessed Dec 17, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/19391>>.