

Panorama, issue 6.2, Fall 2020: Re-Reading American Photographs

Deadline: Feb 17, 2020

Monica Bravo

Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art seeks proposals for papers on the topic of "Re-Reading American Photographs."

Accepted papers will appear in a section of Panorama issue 6.2 (Fall 2020) guest-edited by Monica Bravo and Emily Voelker.

Much of the foundational literature in the history of American photography traces the medium's engagement, and entanglement, with US nationalism. Formative texts in the field chart photography's defining moments – the daguerreotype's naturalization and flourishing in the 1850s, or the proliferation of government-sponsored projects in the 1930s, for example—as running parallel to constructs of nationhood, including narratives of Westward expansion and American exceptionalism. As a result, the historiography of American photography has formed a canon that is both reflective and constitutive of US history, privileging specific points of production. Scholars from Robert Taft to Alan Trachtenberg have shaped, and continue to influence, interpretations of the medium as expressive of uniquely American sensibilities, experiences, and identities. As François Brunet has noted, the story of American photography has been built around a social history that emphasizes the triumph of the medium in the conveyance of "American facts," which still very much informs canonized areas of study in the field today.

Using this scholarship as a point of departure and drawing on methodologies emphasizing circulation and exchange, this call for papers aims to untangle American photography from the history of the US nation-state alone. What happens when we position the medium instead as inextricable from the histories of contact that have shaped the Americas for centuries? Settler colonial occupation and other asymmetric power relations, created through migratory and exilic experiences, formed the sociopolitical conditions in which photographic exchanges in the Americas first began. With the diffusion of photographs through avenues such as direct immigration, exhibitions, periodicals, correspondence, and gifting, the deployment and gradual appropriation of the medium in the "New World" to some extent mirrors that of other colonial technologies and customs. As a material and visual intermediary in such contexts and encounters, can new, specifically American forms of image-making or photographic practice be said to have emerged? Taking a hemispheric approach expands the purview and question of photographs in America, encompassing Indigenous, diasporic, colonial / postcolonial, and migratory contexts of the medium across North, Central, and South America. This framework aims to break down the borders between states, focusing instead on transitory and shifting relations of place, identity, and belonging.

We seek focused essays of approximately 5,000 - 6,000 words that engage with the methodologi-

cal and historiographic questions of American photographs and their interpretations. These texts may take the form of single-object case studies, examinations of intimate networks, and/or interdisciplinary, collaborative exchanges. These papers should move beyond the construct of the US nation-state in their examination of photographic practices that demonstrate dialogue with the longer histories of migration, interchange, and transculturation that have defined the Americas. We encourage authors to consider the unique advantages of the journal's online platform, which permits various digital enhancements, such as high-resolution images with zoom capabilities, the embedding of moving images and films, interactive maps, and the reconstruction of historical exhibitions, to name a few possibilities.

For consideration, please send a 250-word abstract to guest editors Monica Bravo at bravo@cca.edu and Emily Voelker at evoelker@vassar.edu by February 17, 2020.

The deadline for papers will be July 1, 2020.

Reference:

CFP: Panorama, issue 6.2, Fall 2020: Re-Reading American Photographs. In: ArtHist.net, Feb 6, 2020 (accessed Mar 29, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/22572>>.