

## Photography and the Unrepresentable (Colchester 15 May 2012)

Colchester, United Kingdom, May 15, 2012

Taisuke Edamura

Photography and the Unrepresentable  
A History of Photographic (Mis)representation

Art History Graduate Conference  
Tuesday, 15 May 2012  
4.722 (Senate Room, Square 1)  
University of Essex  
Colchester, United Kingdom

Website: [http://www.essex.ac.uk/arhistory/photography\\_and\\_the\\_unrepresentable/](http://www.essex.ac.uk/arhistory/photography_and_the_unrepresentable/)

Keynote Address:

Professor Griselda Pollock (University of Leeds)

Title: When History Assumes an Image: Problems with Knowing What You Are Seeing

Photographic representation is commonly viewed as partial and fragmented. With today's extreme overflow of images, photography increasingly emerges as formally deceptive and ideologically manipulative in how which it serves the construction, circulation, and validation of chosen discourses (e.g. colonialism, social violence and scientific truth). Further challenges to the notion of photographic representation lie in recent history: after World War II, the ethical implications of representation became a primary concern, while the very possibility of representation of traumatic events was questioned by theorists and artists alike. Yet, more recently, writings by Georges Didi-Huberman, Jacques Rancière, and Jean-Luc Nancy have sought to question the impossibility (or taboo) of representation, opening a discussion on how the links between photography, trauma and historical memory can be re-examined. How does the notion of the unrepresentable influence assumptions of photographic truth? What might the unrepresentable look like? Is there a representational impossibility specific to photography? When photography is requested to perform "adequate representation," how and in what context does the request become justifiable? How do today's image-making technologies affect the understanding of the unrepresentable?

This conference aims not only to interrogate contradictions and arbitrariness inherent in the idea of the unrepresentable, but also to open up new perspectives on the relationship between photography and the unrepresentable in artistic, cultural and social practices today.

---

Programme

9:30 - 10:00:

Reception

10:00 - 10:10:

Welcome and Opening Remarks

10:10 - 11:10:

Session 1: Photography and Alternative Reality

Hana Buddeus (AAAD, Prague)

Photography and Fiction in Czech "Action Art"

Natasha Adamou (University of Essex)

"Photography as a Hole": Gabriel Orozco and Photography after Conceptual Art

11:10 - 11:25:

Break

11:25 - 12:25:

Session 2: History and Trauma I: The Presence of the Unrepresentable

Giulia Smith (UCL)

Zero and Zero: Nigel Henderson's Camera Work

Rachele Ceccarelli (University of Aberdeen)

Indexing the War

12:25 - 13:25:

Lunch Break

13:25 - 14:25:

Session 3: Death and Anomaly: The Gaze of Photography

Patrizia Munforte (University of Zurich)

Visibility and Invisibility in Photographic Memorial Portraits of Deceased of the 19th Century

Heather Linton (University of South Florida)

Illumination and Victimization: Mental Illness in Paris and Abidjan

14:25 - 14:40:

Break

14:40 - 16:10:

Session 4: History and Trauma II: Documentation and Photographic Truth

Anne-Sophie Garcia (McGill University)

The Expression of Trauma and the Writing of History in Walid Raad's Atlas Group

Edward Bacal (UCL)

Repetition, Return and Representation: Alain Resnais and the Traumatic Temporality of Mechanic

cal Reproduction

Yoko Tsuchiyama (EHESS)

Visibility and Invisibility of the Nuclear Image in The Family of Man

16:10 - 16:40

Break

16:40 - 17:55:

Keynote Address

Professor Griselda Pollock (University of Leeds)

When History Assumes an Image: Problems with Knowing What You Are Seeing

17:55

Closing Remarks

18:00 - :

Wine Reception

-----

Registration is free to all delegates, but booking is essential. Please contact us at [artpgconf@essex.ac.uk](mailto:artpgconf@essex.ac.uk) to reserve your place.

More details of full programme, abstracts and speaker bios to be published on our website: [http://www.essex.ac.uk/arhistory/photography\\_and\\_the\\_unrepresentable/patu\\_programme.html](http://www.essex.ac.uk/arhistory/photography_and_the_unrepresentable/patu_programme.html).

This conference is generously sponsored by the School of Philosophy and Art History (SPAH) at the University of Essex.

Reference:

CONF: Photography and the Unrepresentable (Colchester 15 May 2012). In: ArtHist.net, Mar 26, 2012 (accessed Feb 20, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/2980>>.