

Photography in Revolution (New York, 31 Mar-2 Apr 11)

Stephanie Schwartz

Call For Papers

Photography in Revolution

Deadline for submissions: July 31, 2010.

The following panel will be part of an international symposium, "Cuba Futures: Past and Present," hosted by the Cuba Project at the Bildner Center for Western Hemisphere Studies. The symposium will be held at The Graduate Center, City University of New York from March 31-April 2, 2011.

For more information visit

<http://web.gc.cuny.edu/bildnercenter/cuba/events.shtml>.

Photography in Revolution

In 1959, the story goes, Fidel Castro brandished a copy of Henry Luce's "Life" magazine in front of his collaborators, explaining "I want something like this." The "this" to which Castro referred, and which he got in the form of publications like "Revolución," was much more than a new means for the circulation of the revolution's epic photographs. It was, as Luce had envisioned it, a new means "to see." To quote Luce from the illustrated magazine's 1936 prospectus: "To see life; to see the world, to eyewitness great events; to watch the faces of the poor and the gestures of the proud. To see, and to show is the mission now undertaken by LIFE." In Cuba, in 1959, "to see," of course, took on a very specific meaning, as many of the nation's new vanguard were illiterate. In conjunction with the revolution's literacy campaign, Castro honed a medium more legible than the alphabet. He honed photography.

Despite the acknowledged importance of photography to the documentation and representation of the revolution and its heroes, historians of the revolution have paid scant attention to photography's role as a tool in the revolution. What, for example, are the implications of Castro's decision to appropriate the mouthpiece of the "American Century," a term coined by Luce to mark the advent of America's global hegemony? What

does it mean to propose or invent a new "way of seeing"? "Photography in Revolution" seeks to bring together scholars interested in attending to these questions to the role photography played in shaping, selling, and disseminating the revolution.

Though framed by events in the 1960s, "Photography and Revolution" seeks to do more than provide a forum for examining the role photography and mass media played in Cuba's past. Responding to the conference's interest in addressing Cuba's future, this panel also welcomes scholars interested in attending to the role the media still plays in shaping Cuban history, culture, and society. For example, how does the prominence given to new media-digital photography, the Internet, and video-in shaping our understanding of our current wars and revolutions impact our understanding of the events of the 1960s? Since the crisis of the 1990s, Cuban artists-both on and off the island-have begun to address the revolution's status as a media event. "Photography and Revolution" welcomes papers attending to these developments in contemporary Cuban artistic practices. How do we understand the renewed interest in photography in the 1990s, as well as the turn away from the epic gestures of the 1960s? Today's artists are not only interested in attending to how history was "told" and documented, but in creating new histories and media events. In short, "Photography in Revolution" seeks to create a forum for addressing the relationship between media and revolution, a forum for exploring how the various and dynamic ways in which the revolution has been mediated are in revolution.

Please send abstracts of proposed papers (500 words) and a cover letter with the author's professional affiliation, a biographical sketch, and contact information to cubaproject@gc.cuny.edu. Proposals will receive preliminary assessment as they arrive. The final deadline for submissions is July 31, 2010.

Reference:

CFP: Photography in Revolution (New York, 31 Mar-2 Apr 11). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 1, 2009 (accessed Apr 17, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/31833>>.