

Making Pictures Talk (Paris, 6–7 Oct 22)

Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art (INHA), Paris, Oct 6–07, 2022

Deadline: Jun 30, 2022

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Call for Papers: Making Pictures Talk / / Faire parler les photographies
International Conference

Photographs are powerful tools to trigger recollection, to elicit self narratives and other's stories, both in private experiences and in administrative procedures – in personal life, among family or friends, or in police stations or courts of law. To make images talk or to talk from and about them has also become a common practice in social sciences that deserves critical examination. This conference aims to explore the role of photographs in storytelling as well as their place in the construction of narratives, to reflect on the ways in which they are used to enrich each other. It intends to initiate a dialogue between actors across different academic disciplines as well as from other fields, including but not limited to literature, documentary film-making, archiving, curation, journalism, and contemporary art. The inter relationship between photographs and narrative can take several forms and all of these forms constitute objects under study in this conference. Narratives can be verbal, as in words spoken during an interview, a recording, or a discussion where the photograph is a prompt. They can be written, as when photographs are placed within a larger iconotextual framework: photographs included and commented on in a written exchange, scribbled words, or a description written on a postcard. Narratives can also be visual, as in collages, assemblies of images, or photomontage, in diaries or photographic albums, or on the walls of a room.

Over the years, a range of theoretical tools have been developed to analyse the encounter between and intertwining of photography and narrative. These tools have often originated in specific disciplines, such as oral history, ethnography or visual anthropology. We wish to interrogate the ways in which each practitioner uses images and testimonies based on his or her disciplinary and analytical perspectives. As such, we intend to compare different practices, confront them, and bring them into dialogue. We hope to discuss and be inspired by a variety of possibilities for documenting photographs and constructing a narrative from or alongside them. Where methodological resort to photographs during fieldwork or within the research process is often a necessity, epistemological considerations and practical difficulties remain. In research contexts, photographs can trigger witnesses to re-enact and to (re)think forgotten or overlooked events, people, situations or gestures, or consider such aspects from a new perspective. Analysing photographs and narratives in a connected manner can contribute to the elucidation – “photo elicitation” – of photographic objects themselves, so often available without any contextual information. These methods may also sometimes provoke verbal or emotional reactions from interviewees that may themselves become objects of analysis.

In the framework of this conference, we invite each participant to reflexively revisit their case studies and to make explicit their way(s) of doing research with or about the interconnection of photographs and narratives. In this perspective, it may be useful to reflect on the following questions: In which circumstances do we find ourselves combining photographs and narratives? How do we associate words and images in the context of our research and investigation? How does one “make” photographs speak? How are spoken or written narratives constructed around or in dialogue with photographs? What is the role of the photograph in constructing a (self-)narrative? How are narratives remade by integrating images? How are photographs reinterpreted and reimagined through narratives? How, through these same narratives, are the meanings of photographs consolidated or destabilised?

The main topics to be explored in this conference include but are not limited to:

- epistolary practices including photographs, postcards, etc.
- diaries and notebooks including images, photo albums, etc.
- narratives constructed from photographs (photo-novels, scrapbooks, etc.)
- investigations in field research making use of photographs (ethnography, sociology, anthropology, etc.)
- oral history interviews involving photographs
- epistemological and ethical concerns in the construction of narratives, both from an editorial and a historiographical perspective

We invite all those, anthropologists, historians, artists, documentarists, writers, etc., whose practice is inscribed in the combination of photographs and narratives to send us a proposal in French or English (a paper abstract of 300 words max and a title) by June 30, 2022 to: images.invisu@inha.fr

Applicants will be informed about the selection in July 2022.

This two-day conference is organised by INVISU (CNRS/INHA) and will be held on 6-7 October 2022 at Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art (INHA), Paris, France.

Conveners:

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Reference:

CFP: Making Pictures Talk (Paris, 6-7 Oct 22). In: ArtHist.net, May 23, 2022 (accessed Sep 14, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/36767>>.