

Re-Thinking Photobooks (Marburg, 14–16 Oct 22)

Philipps-Universität, Marburg, Oct 14–16, 2022

Deadline: Jul 1, 2022

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International Workshop – DFG Research Unit 2288 Journalliteratur

October 14th–16th, 2022

Marburg, Philipps-Universität

Re-Thinking Photobooks: Media constellations in Media Constellations

Like most of the photographic productions of print culture, photobooks have long been assessed based on art historical criteria: the legitimacy or visibility of their maker-author, their artistic intent, originality and impact, their status as coherent and self-contained works, and their institutional posterity, to name a few aspects. Consequently, only a small fraction among a vast number of photographically-illustrated books have been labelled as “photobooks.” The upsurge in photobook research since the start of the 21st century, foregrounded by collectors and increasing the value of these selected publications from their collections, has all but consolidated this art historical framework.

More recent work, however, from such various fields as visual studies, media studies, photographic history, book studies, etc., has criticized the focus on photobooks as works of art and reconsidered the cultural and social implications driving their development, as well as sought to examine the network of actors behind their production, circulation and, in some cases, has unpacked the prior narrative of canonization that has been developing (Heiting & Jaeger ; Bair 2016; Meizel 2017; Clark 2018; Ruchatz 2018; Morin & Ruchatz 2021). We propose to build upon these approaches and to broaden the outlook by engaging with a wide variety of photobooks: photojournalistic and/or thematic monographs, popular book series, coffee-table books, celebratory retrospective volumes, historical (re)collections, manuals, and the like. Such an approach also benefits from situating the history of the photobook at the intersection of multiple media (with or against which it manifests its medial identity, evolving and changing over time) rather than as a stand-alone genre. We seek to understand the photobook as an object constituted by media constellations, tying medially diverse content—different kinds of images and writings, drawing on what is technologically available at a given time—and combining it into meaningfully arranged double pages by ways of the layout. In turn, the publication of photographs in book form also productively refers to their surrounding constellated media cultures, ranging from magazines to audiovisual media such as film and television, all of which are taken up, remediated, or contrasted in and through photographic books, but which scholars have tended to elide as they focus on the independent status of the genre of the photobook itself.

In the workshop and in the edited volume set to ensue, we invite participants to explore how both canonical and/or understudied examples have contributed to the structure and history of the “photobook format” as it relates to other forms and genres. We aim to carve out how the photobook crafts a – dynamic – medial identity of its own in this intermedial network. Particular attention will be paid to the historical instances in which the said format is challenged or transformed; and to the strategies of photobook publishing and how they are informed by other media practices and institutional structures. By addressing the photobook as a media constellation in media constellations, the workshop and the ensuing publication suggest that what distinguishes the photobook as an object of photo-historical inquiry is its very intermedial history.

This workshop is jointly organized by Alice Morin and Jens Ruchatz – Project 5, “A Media-Based Comparison of Fragment Migration: Photographs in Periodicals and Books in the Twentieth Century” and Vanessa Schwartz – Director, Visual Studies Research Institute at the University of Southern California.

It will be held in person between October 14th-16th, 2022 in various locations in Marburg, Germany. The working language will be English. Funding provided by the DFG Research Unit 2288 “Journalliteratur” will allow the workshop to cover the travel and accommodation costs for participants.

To apply, please send an 1-page abstract and a short biographical note by July 1st, 2022 to alice.morin@uni-marburg.de, jens.ruchatz@staff.uni-marburg.de and vschwart@usc.edu. Notifications of acceptance will go out by July 7th, 2022.

The workshop is conceived as on the model of a brainstorming retreat, consisting in panel sessions as well as moments of informal exchange. Participants are expected to engage fully by presenting papers, discussing presentations in the context of the current state and future of photobook research and attending throughout.

The papers (approx. 10-15 pages) will all be pre-circulated and read beforehand. They will be due by September 17th, 2022. During the workshop, a short presentation and contextualization of research by each participant will be followed by extensive discussion of each paper by the whole group.

Each contribution should offer original research addressing (specific) photobooks or photobook genres in the context of a media constellation. It should also reflect on the the stakes of examining the photobook form in relation to other media.

Papers are meant to form the basis for an article-length publication and thus should not be already-published work. We welcome genuine work-in-progress and will ask each participant to submit ten entries to a group bibliography with their proposal.

The workshop and the critical discussions it will yield are meant to form the basis for a collective publication (not necessarily limited to contributions by workshop participants), edited by Alice

Morin, Jens Ruchatz and Vanessa Schwartz.

Initial Bibliography

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Parr, Martin & Gerry Badger. "Introduction." *The Photobook: A History* (Vol. I). Phäidon, 2004, pp. 6-11.

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Schwartz, Vanessa. *Jet Age Aesthetic: The Glamour of Media in Motion*. Yale UP, 2020.

Sichel, Kim. "Introduction." *Making Strange. The Modernist Photobook in France*. Yale UP 2020, pp. 1-10.

Schürmann, Anja & Steffen Siegel. "Neue Perspektiven der Fotobuchforschung." Editorial, *Fotogeschichte* 159, 2021/1, pp. 3-5.
<https://www.fotogeschichte.info/bisher-erschienen/hefte-ab-150/159/>

See also Thomas Wiegand, "Bücher über Fotobücher":
<https://www.fotokritik.de/index.php?art=154> (consulted in April 2022).

Works cited

Bair, Nadya. "The Decisive Network: Producing Henri Cartier-Bresson at Mid-Century." *History of Photography* 40, 20162, pp. 146-166.

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Heiting, Manfred & Roland Jaeger. *Autopsie. Deutschsprachige Fotobücher 1918 bis 1945* (vol. 1). Steidl, 2012.

Meizel, Laureline. *Inventer le livre illustré par la photographie en France: 1867-1897*. Ph.D. in Art history, Université Paris I-Panthéon Sorbonne, defended 2017.

Morin, Alice & Jens Ruchatz. „Photography In/Between Media Formats. The Work of the Format from Magazine to Books“, in: Interfaces, Nr. 45 [= Jeux de formats / Playing with Format], 2021, <https://journals.openedition.org/interfaces/1978>

Ruchatz, Jens. „Das Kochbuch als Fotobuch. Theoretische Überlegungen und historische Sondierungen.“ Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft 44, 2018, pp. 267-317.

Reference:

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