

Photography in its Environment (online/Leicester, 12–13 Jun 23)

Photographic History Research Centre, De Montfort University, Leicester, UK / Hybrid (in person and online), Jun 12–13, 2023

Registration deadline: Jun 8, 2023

Prof Gil Pasternak

Recent challenges such as the climate crisis have pushed the field to consider how photography shapes and is shaped by the environment. From the mining of natural resources to the effects of mass digital storage, the environmental impact of photography is at the forefront of discussions in photography research, education and practice.

In this annual conference of the Photographic History Research Centre (PHRC) at De Montfort University Leicester (UK), speakers will reconsider the history of photography using the environment, broadly understood, as a departing point. What kind of histories can be written about photography in its environment? Would it be useful to understand photography as an environment? Papers will not only examine photography from the point of view of current environmental concerns, but also, how photographic practices, images and archives have developed in relation to natural, industrial and other environments. By centering the environment as an analytical category, we hope to discuss the ways in which natural, colonial, personal, digital and other types of environments have shaped photography as well as how photographic histories can help to understand environmental histories.

Talks will consider topics that address themes and questions like:

- How exactly has photography participated in the construction and disruption of environments?
- What has been the environmental impact of the production, consumption, circulation and storage of photography, in the past as well as the present?
- Histories of environmentally friendly photography before the 21st century.
- How have distinct environmental conditions around the globe influenced photographic practices, the development of photographic processes, and the course of the history of photography more specifically?
- What contributions can the field of photographic history make to deepen understanding about the climate crisis?
- How can photographic historians draw on their knowledge and expertise to assist in nurturing care for the environment and its sustainability for future generations?

Keynote speakers

Estelle Blaschke (University of Basel)

Conohar Scott (University of Lincoln)

PROGRAMME (provisional)

As in recent previous years, we offer a hybrid conference, allowing speakers and delegates to participate remotely or on site.

MONDAY 12 June 2023

9.30 – 10.00 Registration and coffee

10.00 – 10.15 Welcome

10.15 – 11.00 Keynote Lecture: Estelle Blaschke (University of Basel) - Image, Data, Archive: Photography as a tool and a resource in capitalist world-making

11.00 – 11.30 Discussion

11.30– 11.45 Comfort Break

Panel 1. Supply Lines

11.45 – 12.00 Jo Gane (Birmingham City University / De Montfort University) – Photography in the Industrial Environment of 1840s Birmingham

12.00 – 12.15 Maria Fernanda Dominguez Londono (University of Cambridge) –Daguerreotypes in the Heart of the Andes: Photography, Landscape,and Extraction

12.15 – 12.35 Discussion

12.35 – 13.45 Lunch

Panel 2. Colonial Roots

13.45 – 14.00 Jarrod Hore (UNSW) – Situating Visions of Nature: Landscape Photography and Settler Colonial Senses of Site

14.00 – 14.15 Yasmin Gapper (Independent) – Slow Ecologies: Sir John Herschel’s vegetable photographs ca. 1841-1843 and the colonial environments of photography

14.15 – 14.30 Mary Phan (Victoria and Albert Museum) – Early Wildlife Photography and Modern Memory. The Legacy of Radclyffe Dugmore’s Mechanical Truth

14.30 – 15.00 Discussion

15.00 – 15.45 Coffee break

Panel 3. Environmental Afterlives

15.45 – 16.00 Sheila Masson (National Collection of Aerial Photography) – The Directorate of Overseas Surveys Project: saved from the skip and now saving the planet

16.15 – 16.30 Helen Anderson (British Museum) – Africa’s culture in crisis – a view from the past

16.30 – 16.50 Discussion

17.00 – 18.00 Reception (For online guests, 17.00 - 18.00 we welcome you to meet one another on Wonder)

19.00 Conference dinner: Kayal (153 Granby St, LE1 6FE, Leicester)

TUESDAY 13 June 2023

9.00 Registration and coffee

9.15 – 10.00 Keynote Lecture: Conohar Scott (University of Lincoln) - Adopting an Attitude or Taking a Position: making ontological claims for photography and environmental activism.

10.00 – 10.15 Discussion

10.15– 10.30 Comfort Break

Panel 4. Heavy metals

10.30 – 10.45 Alice Cazenave (Goldsmiths, University of London) – Legacies of Photographic Silver: Entangled Geologies, Histories and Lives

10.45 – 11.00 Anja Hysvær Langgât (Norsk Folkemuseum/Norwegian Museum of Cultural History) – Preus Foto A/S and the greenwashing of a Norwegian photofinishing laboratory in the 1970s

11.00 – 11.15 Chris Balaschak (Flagler College) – Surveying Silver in Lewis Baltz's Park City

11.15 - 11.45 Discussion

11.45 – 13.00 Lunch

Panel 5. Political Environments

13.00 – 13.15 Nelly Ating (Cardiff University) – Anti-Apartheid Passport Photographs in an Ecology of Refusal

13.15 – 13.30 Barbora Kundračiková (Palacký University / Olomouc Museum of Art-SEFO) – The Concept of Concerned Photographer

13.30 – 13.50 Discussion

13.50– 14.00 Comfort break

Panel 6. Manufacturing Environments

14.00 – 14.15 Katherine Mintie (Yale University) – Pulp Histories: Kodak Photographic Paper and Pollution

14.15 – 14.30 Joris Mercelis (Johns Hopkins) – The photographic industry and the construction

of tropical environments (late 19th century-1960s)

14.30 – 14.45 Frances Cullen McGill – A Fling with Photography: Disposability, Recycling, and the Currency of the Single-Use Camera at the End of the Twentieth Century

14.45 - 15.00 Emmet von Stackelberg (Rutgers) – Purity's Poisons: Some Consequences of Making Images Move

15.00 – 15.45 Discussion

Visit our conference webpage for updates and registration:
<https://photographichistory.wordpress.com/annual-conference-2023-2/>

Reference:

CONF: Photography in its Environment (online/Leicester, 12-13 Jun 23). In: ArtHist.net, Mar 25, 2023 (accessed Oct 16, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/38879>>.