

Histories of Photography (Paris, 28–29 Jan 25)

Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Paris, Jan 28–29, 2025

Deadline: May 31, 2024

invisu.cnrs.fr/seminaires-et-conferences/colloque-histoires-de-photographies/histories-of-photography-from-the-struggles-for-independance/

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Histories of Photography from the Struggles for Independence: practices, circulations and aesthetics.

International Symposium.

It's a well-known fact that the history of photography as a discipline has for the most part been constructed as that of "Western" photography, more specifically that of Europe and the United States. Between the introduction of so-called "extra-Western" photographers on the contemporary art market since the 1990s and the numerous works on the history of the medium during colonial periods, there is still a lack of information on the history of photography from the liberation and independence struggles onwards, from a global and transnational perspective, across all geographical zones. The aim of this colloquium is to highlight the histories of photography generated during the processes of decolonization, while rethinking methodological and aesthetic approaches to the medium that are still too Western-centric.

What has happened to the production and circulation of photographers and their images since the independence struggles? How did new iconographies, new aesthetics and, with them, new networks of visual exchange develop, complicating the one-sided visibilities and photographic circulations from the « South » to the « North » established during the colonial periods?

While numerous works analyze the imperial and coercive nature of photography through colonial expansion (Folliard, 2020; Edward, 2001; Hight and Sampson, 2013; Sysling, 2016; Boetsch and Ferrie, 2001), leading to the development of imagery charged with exoticism and stereotypes (Khemir 1994, 2001; Behdad and Gartlan, 2013; Taraud, 2003), as well as an economy of images of the colonies diligent by and for Western countries (Barthes, 2019), the historiography of photography outside Europe and the United States still predominantly represents that of histories of the medium during colonial periods. However, academic research and curatorial initiatives in Europe and the United States have focused on contemporary African photography since the early 1990s, while the histories of photographers from the other « Suds » remain less well known.

In France, the challenges and obstacles to a globalized history of photography (Photographica magazine no. 3, 2021; Photo-monde colloquium, Musée du quai Branly, 2023) are leading to new approaches based on epistemological and methodological shifts.

Still from the French-speaking point of view, works (Chominot, 2007; Susana Lourenço Marques, 2020) and exhibitions (*Résistance visuelle généralisée. Livres de photographie et mouvements de libération* (Angola, Mozambique, Guinée-Bissau, Cap-Vert, 1960-1980), Catarina Boieiro and Raquel Schefer, INHA, 2021-2022) have explored the use of photography as a tool of resistance during the wars of liberation, other aspects of photographic histories from later periods have yet to come to light, even as the term decolonization raises scientific questions (Murphy, 2023).

While research (Bajorek, 2020) addresses the role of photography in the construction of national narratives and the elaboration of a decolonial political imagination in certain West African countries, recent works have undertaken to reconsider the history of the medium at the crossroads of the Cold War and decolonizations. Socialist and anti-imperialist solidarities redraw new cartographies of image exchanges and practices outside or through capitalist networks, and summon up representations at the frontiers of propaganda and visual experimentation under the motifs of solidarity between peoples, the future and revolutionary struggles (Thy Phu, Erina Duganne, Andrea Noble, 2022). Countering the imaginations of the Cold War conveyed by American visual imperialism, other authors highlight the visualities and circulations of private, intimate images from the so-called « South » and non-aligned countries (Thy Phu, 2022), pointing to the expanded role of photography during this period.

Finally, these post-independence photographic histories present researchers with a number of problems, including the lack of institutional legitimization of photography in the countries of origin, problems of access to sources in some formerly colonized countries, and the loss and destruction of archives. Specific methodologies such as oral history will be questioned.

Participants

This symposium welcomes researchers, curators and photographers from all geographical areas. Proposals may concern any post-colonial period from the 19th to the 20th century.

Organization committee

Gaëlle Prodhon, INHA

Scientific committee

Gaëlle Prodhon (INHA / InVisu / U-Paris Nanterre)

Érika Nimis (Université du Québec à Montréal)

Marian Nur Goni (U-Paris 8, AIAC)

Krupa Desai (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai / British Art Network)

Raquel Schefer (U-Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris 3, CAV, Département de cinéma et audio-visuel)

Olivier Hadouchi (Chercheur et programmeur indépendant)

Damarice Amao (Centre Pompidou)

Manuel Charpy (InVisu, CNRS/INHA)

Call for proposals

Abstracts in english or french (approx. 500 words) must be sent by May 31, 2024 at the latest, with a short biography, affiliation information, and a bibliography (for researchers). Authors will receive an answer in June 2024. Travel and accommodation expenses for selected participants will be covered. Proposals should be forwarded by e-mail to: gaelle.prodhon@inha.fr

We welcome proposals addressing one or more of the following topics:

History

- Histories of the passage, transition, training and circulation of photographers and photographs from the liberation and independence struggles of the 19th and 20th centuries.
- Histories of hindered and unfinished photographic projects
- Histories of the construction and deconstruction of visual cultures and imaginaries from the independence struggles of the 19th to the 20th centuries.
- Histories of photographic networks and trajectories shaping new Cold War cartographies and imaginaries
- Histories of networks building alternative image economies outside or through the capitalist circuits of photography
- Histories of the creation of national press agencies

Socio-aesthetics

- Photography's reconsideration of power relationships: domination/resistance, emancipation/reversals of gaze
- Porosities between auctorial photography (in the face of the question of anonymity) and propaganda photography, between dissidentism and conformism, between individual and collective action
- Photography as a vector for the construction of cultural, collective and national identities, political imaginations, fictions and futures
- The question of materiality, with technological and material approaches differing from those of Europe and the United States
- The paradigm of the gaze and photographic modernities outside Europe and the USA

Images and approaches that rethink Western-centric aesthetic criteria and approaches to photography

Methodologies / Epistemology

- Considering the obstacles of certain fields, the lack of sources, and the disappearance or destruction of archives
 - Countering homogenizing narratives, or how to approach specific individual practices and the interplay of local and global scales
 - Questioning the oral history method in writing the history of photography, as well as micro-historical approaches
 - Question the limits of postcolonial approaches to understanding these photographic histories
- Challenge the Eurocentric historical view of photography, and imagine new « non-Western » ways of thinking about photography as an epistemological axis

Reference:

CFP: Histories of Photography (Paris, 28-29 Jan 25). In: ArtHist.net, Feb 22, 2024 (accessed Jul 26, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/41275>>.