

International Symposium of Central European Photography (Budepest, 28–29 Jan 25)

Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design Budapest (MOME), Centre for Photography, Jan 28–29, 2026

Deadline: Nov 10, 2025

Judit Gellér PhD

OPEN CALL /// CALL FOR ENTRIES:

4th Work in Context International Symposium of Central European Photography.

Theme /// PERIPHERAL PRIORITIES:!

This call invites you to explore the overlooked and underexplored aspects of photography in Central Europe. The symposium seeks to re-examine established narratives by rejecting dichotomies such as good and bad, or fresh and outdated. Instead, it encourages experts to share nuanced perspectives, to acknowledge the coexistence of compatible yet divergent truths, and to favour differentiated viewpoints. We particularly welcome proposals that address how memory, politics, and systemic legacies shape photographic practices, especially when seen through the eyes of those on the margins, including politically oppressed, female, or émigré artists. This edition coincides with two significant milestones: the bicentenary of photography and the 40th anniversary of academic photography education in Hungary. By connecting these anniversaries, the 4th WiC will examine the complex transformation of photography as both an art and a technology in the context of the region's tumultuous past and uncertain futures. We invite reflection on an increasingly polarized and fragile world by interrogating contrasts and juxtapositions of opposites, often compellingly phrased in oxymorons. A dozen examples are provided below as possible points of departure for presentations, lectures, or discussions; alternative ideas and proposals are equally welcome. Based on the incoming proposals, we will consider narrowing down the scope of topics discussed in the symposium.

- Messy Polarization: When did we shift from conversation to shouting?
- Upcycled Single-use Visuality: Social and artificial imagery in our daily lives.
- Fake Truthing: Hidden agendas, the photograph, and text.
- Homogeneous Extremes: Seeing monsters everywhere you look.
- Insider Outsiders: Colonial and post-colonial themes in Central Europe.
- Émigré National Treasures: Is leaving home a requirement for leaving a mark?
- Right Here, Left Now: Reclaiming stereotypes in Central European history and art.
- Exclusivity of Inclusion: Curating with a "Sauron eye" beyond the global South.
- Speculative Facts: A bicentenary perspective on the language of photography.
- Radical Kindness: The limitations of ethical photography.
- Shared Selves: Personal stories in an overwhelming sea of personal narratives.
- Quarantine Freedom: Accessibility issues of the Central European mindset.

We believe in the power of open discussion and in the sharing of good practices. We welcome abstracts from a wide range of professionals engaging with photography: artists, photographers, educators, journalists, specialists in various fields such as philosophy, cultural studies, art history, anthropology, technology, and sociology, as well as practitioners in applied research, including museum professionals and curators. The two ways to answer the call are: either send a proposal for a theoretical lecture, or submit an artist talk on your photography project, both for a duration of 30 minutes. The 4th WiC symposium is seeking contributions from those who question and challenge current artistic practices through novel ideas, creative work, or technological innovation. Ideas are valued on every scale, from the smallest to the most expansive.

Selection of proposals will begin in mid-November, and invitations will be sent in early December 2025. The symposium will run for two days, with lectures and presentations on the first day, followed by studio and institution visits and exhibition viewings on the second. An online archive of presentations will be made available during the event, and a publication of selected contributions will follow.

Keywords ///

Central Europe, bicentenary of photography, shared knowledge, survival strategies, art and politics, prospects of photography, critical times, reality check, overlooked narratives, systemic legacies, marginalized artists, cultural dichotomy, public vs. private sphere, challenging stereotypes, post-truth visual culture, photography education

Submission Guidelines ///

We invite proposals for 30-minute presentations on photography related to the themes of PERIPHERAL PRIORITIES:!. Please choose one of the two formats below:

For Lectures: Submit an abstract of no more than 3,000 characters (including spaces). The abstract should clearly outline your topic, argument, and its relevance to the Central European context and the themes of the open call.

For Photography Project Presentations: Submit a project statement of no more than 2,000 characters (including spaces), accompanied by a series of images. The statement should clearly outline your project and its relevance to the Central European context and the themes of this call. The total file size must not exceed 10 MB.

General Requirements ///

Language: All proposals must be submitted in English.

File Format: Please compile your abstract or statement, along with a brief professional bio, into a single PDF file.

Submission: All applications must be submitted via our online platform

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeQ0CwFHNaL54W-62UYGISefCL6Scc7P4BBLDqHr6zdvV9T8A/viewform>

Commitment: By submitting a proposal, you confirm that you will be available to attend the symposium in Budapest on 28–29 January 2026 should your proposal be selected.

Key Dates ///

Submission Deadline: 10 November 2025

Notification of Acceptance: 6 December 2025

Symposium Dates: 28–29 January 2026

Location & Travel ///

The symposium will be held at the Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design (MOME) in Budapest and organized by the Centre for Photography. To reduce our environmental impact, we encourage and will only support travel by train or coach.

About the Symposium ///

The Work in Context International Symposium of Central European Photography series explores the unique strengths and challenges of the region's photography scene.

The first edition, Past, Present, and Future, directly engaged with photography through these concepts. The second took a closer look at the region through geography in the Landscape of Photography, while the third explored social urgency under the theme of Responsibility. This edition raises the question of how meaningful dialogue can be maintained across echo chambers and amid the noise of reductive slogans.

More information about previous editions of the symposium is available here: <https://workincontext.mome.hu/>

Organizing Committee ///

Judit Gellér, PhD, art historian, curator, senior lecturer

Gábor Arion Kudász DLA, photographer, associate professor, Head of the MOME Centre for Photography

Krisztina Erdei DLA, photographer, Head of Photography MA program of MOME

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Reference:

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