

Photographic Interiors: between Staging and Documentation (Paris, 7 Apr 26)

Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art (INHA), Paris, Apr 07, 2026

Deadline: Nov 7, 2025

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From family pictures to police photographs and social surveys, the photographic documentation of private interiors often finds pictures in front of the lens. It turns the images in the interior, along with their often fleeting arrangements, into fixed coordinates. It also reminds us how our lives are surrounded by images. Photography, along with other printed image technologies, is a major component of the ordinary visual environment that papers domestic surfaces, at the same time as it proves to be a particularly adequate means of documenting interiors.

This conference aims to think through this mirror effect of photographed photographs, by considering together images of domestic worlds and everyday image practices anchored in the dwelling. The aim is twofold: to examine the various ways of capturing interiors through photography, and to think about the life of images within interiors. While photography can make it seem as if a place is inhabited by the portraits that feature on walls or on top of furniture, interior space is constructed and inhabited through image practices.

Our focus will be on interiors as inhabited spaces broadly conceived: domestic spaces, but also less delimited or more collective spaces that may still be personalized – such as dorms, cells, the interior of vehicles, etc. We will thus test the hypothesis that the presence of pictures and the photographing of such environments are a marker and a way of appropriating space. What is at stake throughout is private image practices.

All types of pictures may be considered here: from photographic portraits to reproductions of historic paintings, from postcards to photo booth portraits and illustrated newspaper pages used as wall covering, etc. Interior surfaces are a key space for the deployment, and then the observation, of the visual environment created by the printed image since the 19th century. One of the aims of this conference will be to revisit the idea of a democratization of images through such circulations. By paying attention to the interior – complete with its rooms, walls, furniture tops, display systems for images – we hope to explore the everyday uses of images and the construction of social spaces. Living spaces are also the locus of the life of images.

Following both images and the practices that they are associated with around the interior, is a means of thinking out discontinuities but also juxtapositions and porosities between private and public, family genealogy and political affiliation, the massification of images and the singularity of lives.

We welcome contributions on the following topics without spatial or temporal limits (and without being exhaustive):

- How images are arranged, hung, framed, and kept in interiors
- The materiality of practices: magnets, thumbtacks, tape, frames...
- The staging and combination of images, their coexistence, the narratives they form
- Stagings of the self through images
- The fluid boundaries between more or less private spaces (from the living room to the bedroom): how are these spaces crossed and delimited by pictures in the open?
- Off-frame and absent images: what are the alternative archives for pictures that remain out of sight?
- Interiors photographed with their pictures as archives for other histories of photography
- Gender implications in the photographic capture of interiors as well as image uses
- The temporality of images: the tension between the fixed frame of photographs and the some-time ephemeral nature of picture arrangements. Can we trace the mobility of images through the repeated photographing of a specific place?
- The appropriation and domestication of a place through images, especially in contexts of confinement, coercion or duress
- The domestic context does not preclude politics: how is it re-enacted, displayed, dissimulated... in interiors?
- Domestic and global circulations of images

We invite proposals in French or English with an abstract of 300 words max. with a title and an image. These should be sent no later than November 7, 2025 to images.invisu@inha.fr.

This conference, organized by InVisu (INHA/CNRS) and ECHELLES (Université Paris Cité/CNRS), will take place on April 7, 2026 at the Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art (INHA), Paris, France.

Some funding for transportation and accommodation will be available, with priority given to early career scholars and/or scholars without permanent positions.

Organization:

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