

Chemical Histories of Photography (Basel, 23–25 Oct 25)

eikones - Center for the Theory and History of the Image, University of Basel, Oct 23–25, 2025

Katerina Korola

The symposium "Chemical Histories of Photography" will be taking place at eikones - Center for the Theory and History of the Image, University of Basel October 23-25, 2025.

What does the photographic image share with synthetic dyes, fertilizer, and pharmaceuticals? Inspired by the city of Basel's position as a global center of the chemical industry, this symposium investigates photography's chemical relations, tracing the networks shaped by material resources, industrial infrastructure, and scientific expertise, as well as the ecological legacies of photographic production.

The symposium will conclude with an artist talk and workshop led by photographer and researcher Alice Cazenave (Goldsmiths, University of London), an advisor to the UK-based collective Sustainable Darkroom and current Ansel Adams Fellow at the Center for Creative Photography at the University of Arizona.

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PROGRAM

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23

4:00-5:00 pm: Visit to the Fotosammlung Ruth und Peter Herzog at the Jacques Herzog und Pierre de Meuron Kabinett with curator Michalis Valaouris (for invited participants)

6:00-6:20 pm: Opening Remarks

6:20-7:50 pm: SESSION 1 – Industrial Ecologies

"Daughter of Coal," Michelle Henning (University of Liverpool)

"Chemical Image Factories: The Case of Cibachrome," Stephan Graf (Photo-Fribourg)

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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 24

10:00-11:30 pm: SESSION 2 – Colonial Chemistry

"Chemical Frontiers: Photography, Fertilizer, and Settler Colonialism," Siobhan Angus (Carleton

University)

“Ego Ipso.’ Hermann-Kummler-Frey’s Brazilian Photographs between Chemical History and Colonial Image Production,” Denise Bertschi (Collegium Helveticum)

2:00-3:30 pm: SESSION 3 – Chemical Images

“Photography’s Metabolism: Eastman Kodak’s Petrochemical Turn,” Kevin Hong (Yale University)

“Color Sells: The Art and Techniques of Advertising Photography,” Estelle Blaschke (University of Basel)

4:30-6:00 pm: ARTIST TALK – “Here Many Worlds Collide: Toxic Affinities of Photographic Silver,” Alice Cazenave (Goldsmiths, University of London)

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SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25

10:00-12:30 pm: Chemigram Workshop for Invited Participants

Reference:

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