

Photography's Material Conditions (Nicosia, 26–28 Nov 26)

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Photography's Material Conditions: Residue, Object(hood) and the Expanded Field.

Since the 1960s, photography has operated within an expanded field of fluid and intertwined media. More recent discussions on the post-medium condition and the expanded field of photography have situated the photographic image within debates about the collapsing boundaries between media and the emergence of modalities that unfold between image and object, as well as between representation and construction. These shifting boundaries prompt a reconsideration of how different media construct and transform conditions of visibility, particularly in relation to photography's material conditions as they are reconfigured through emerging processes of (re)production. At the same time, systems of transmission and mediation produce new visual economies that shape contemporary modes of spectatorship. How do such expansions enable practices that restructure visual discourse and our interpretation of material cues? How might we understand the so-called "death of representation" alongside the emergence of new materialities? How can we speak of photographs' object(hood)?

Contemporary photographic practice often reclaims object(hood) as a contingent and negotiated condition through installation, sculptural display and material manipulations such as folding, layering, embedding or printing on alternative surfaces. These interventions foreground the residual and material qualities of the image, its paper, surface, texture, weight and scale, countering the presumed dematerialisation often associated with the digital. Residue becomes the grounding element through which the image re-enters matter, revealing photography simultaneously as image and as thing. Residue, a crucial aspect of photography, is a concept that extends beyond intrinsic materialities to rethink both object(hood) and the ascendancy of the image as a pervasive cultural surface, a site of lingering traces, and of transformation. Photographic residuality operates across social, cultural and historical dimensions, placing the status (and relationship?) of image and object in a dialectical tension. Residuality does not merely arise from relations between object and image as a mimetic trace; rather, it emerges through a process of ongoing abstraction, a distanced yet permeable capability, capable of reconfiguring perception and redefining the material conditions of visual experience.

Responding to these shifts, this conference seeks to explore the manifold ways in which photography redefines its own material presence within an expanded field of artistic and spatial practices. As the photograph exceeds the flatness traditionally associated with the medium and enters new dialogues with sculptural, performative and spatial forms, it challenges how materiality is pro-

duced and perceived. How do contemporary photographic practices reconstitute the photograph as a tactile, situated and contingent object rather than as pure representation? In what ways do these transformations prompt a reconsideration of spectatorship, temporality and the affective relation between viewer and image?

We welcome papers that engage with these questions through historical, theoretical or practice-based approaches. Suggested themes, but not limited to, include:

Photography as Object

- The ontology of the photographic object
- The paradoxical condition of the object in visual culture
- The politics of photographic objects within economies of circulation
- The photographic object as relational and performative
- Photography as a collectable object, fetish, or commodity

Object(hood) in Contemporary Photography

- Object(hood) versus Image(hood) in contemporary photographic practices
- Post-medium conditions and hybrid practices
- Photography and sculpture: hybrid object(hood) and emergent forms
- Installation as interpretation: spatial relations between images and objects

Material and De-Material Conditions

- Materiality and digital imaging: from physical prints to virtual existence
- Photographic dematerialisation: re-evaluating images
- Photography and transmedial material processes
- Still and Moving images: temporal crossings and durational experiments

Residues, Traces and Photography's Afterlives

- Resituability as a theoretical framework in image-object relations
- Afterlives of images: reuse, reactivation, and remediation
- Residual traces in photography: indexical excess, archival debris, and latent histories
- Damage, decay, entropy and material failure as generative aesthetic strategies

Curatorial and Exhibitionary Strategies

- Documents, artefacts, visual cues, and artworks: reframing photography in a museum context
- Curatorial authorship and the mediation of photographic meaning
- Display, framing, and context in the exhibition of photographic objects
- Virtual, digital, and immersive environments as modes of photographic presentation

We invite proposals for 20-minute presentations from various disciplines, such as: photography, art history and theory, visual sociology, anthropology, museology, philosophy, ethnography, education, cultural studies, and visual and media studies. To propose a paper, please submit a 450-word abstract (including references) through our online submission system, no later than: May 15th, 2026. To access our submission system, please follow this link: <https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=icpt2026>

Reference:

CFP: Photography's Material Conditions (Nicosia, 26-28 Nov 26). In: ArtHist.net, Feb 4, 2026 (accessed

May 6, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/51663>>.