

Bandung 1955: Photography, Visual Diplomacy and Anti-Colonial Solidarity

Deadline: Apr 30, 2026

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Call for contributions for the publication "Bandung 1955: Photography, Visual Diplomacy and Anti-Colonial Solidarity".

The Asian-African Conference, which took place from 18 to 24 April 1955 in Bandung, Indonesia, marked a pivotal moment in the decolonization process. 29 Asian and African countries, many of which had recently gained independence, gathered to discuss new forms of international cooperation that transcended the Cold War power blocs. Hosted by Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Myanmar and Sri Lanka, the conference became the precursor to the Non-Aligned Movement that was founded in 1961 as an alliance of countries mostly from the so-called Global South, which were not formally aligned with or against the Western or Eastern bloc during the Cold War.

The Bandung Conference was also a major media event, whose global perception was shaped by photographic images, produced by international press photographers, state photo agencies and local photographers that continue to shape the visual memory of the Bandung Conference to this day. These images played a decisive role in visually articulating the 'Bandung Spirit', a vision of anti-colonial solidarity and Afro-Asian modernity that has been invoked many times since. While there is a growing field of research on the history of photography during the Cold War as well as on the Bandung Conference (Phu/Noble/Duganne (eds.), *Cold War Camera*, 2022; Lovejoy/Pajala (eds.), *Remapping Cold War Media*, 2022), the photographic practices of the conference have so far only been the subject of little attention (one exception is Lee, "The Decolonizing Camera" 2020).

This planned publication views the Bandung Conference as both a historical event and a visual dispositive. Photographs of the delegations, conference rooms, and public performances translated political relations into visual forms, making postcolonial statehood visible. They produced a visual vocabulary of diplomatic encounters intended to represent solidarity, equality, and international cooperation, despite or regardless of global power asymmetries also at play. In doing so, photographs of the conference operated both retrospectively and prospectively, documenting a political moment while simultaneously imagining a future of postcolonial cooperation. In this sense, Bandung functions as a photographic 'moment in time', the images of which, however, have a powerful future impact.

- How do photographs of the conference articulate postcolonial statehood, diplomatic relations, and anti-colonial solidarity?
- Which visual formulas structure the photographic representation of Bandung? What role do body politics, gender orders, spatial staging and symbolic gestures play?

- What role did different photographic actors, such as international press photographers, state image agencies or amateur photographers, play?
- How did representations of the conference differ in Western, socialist and postcolonial media?
- How are photographs of the Bandung Conference being reinterpreted or politically reactivated in archives, museums, exhibitions and contemporary art today?

The publication approaches photographs of the Bandung Conference through the concept of 'currency' (Kouoh et al. (eds.), *Lucid Knowledge*, 2022). The photographs gain their political and historical significance not only through their original capture, but also through their ongoing circulation, reproduction, and reinterpretation. As visual 'currency', these images circulate between the press, archives, museums, and artistic discourse to this day.

The focus is therefore on photographic practices, image politics, and the visual legacy of the Bandung Conference. Contributions may focus on individual photographers, image series, archives, or media circulation processes. Texts on contemporary artistic positions that engage with or reinterpret Bandung photographs in installations, films or archival projects, especially those by artists from countries from the so-called Global South, are also welcome. We consider the Bandung Conference as a photographic event, exploring it not only as a pivotal political event, but also as a moment when fundamental questions about the political effectiveness, global comprehensibility, and sustainability of photographic images are raised.

The publication is planned for October 2027. Texts should be 5000-6000 words long.

For the selected articles, reproductions fees for the images will be covered (subject to prior negotiation). Language support in terms of proof-reading and translation is available for authors. Precariously employed authors will receive an honorarium.

Please submit your proposal (max. 500 words) and a short CV in a single PDF-document by Thursday, 30 April 2026 to: sophie.junge@kunstgeschichte.uni-muenchen.de

Reference:

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