

Vision and Veiling (online, 5-7 Nov 26)

Online, Nov 5–07, 2026

Deadline: May 31, 2026

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Vision and Veiling: Photographic Resilience and Sociopolitical Change.
Photography Network Virtual Symposium.

Photography practitioners, historians, and curators respond in a multitude of ways to political and cultural contexts that challenge their work. Moreover, in response to efforts to remove, omit, occlude, obscure, or manipulate, photographs often persist, transform, and recirculate, reformulating visual worlds. Photographs bear a complex relationship to political and social power; authorities might manipulate or remove photographs to further their goals, but forms of covering up, self-censorship, or self-fashioning might also function in the name of individual privacy, safety, or resistance. Furthermore, as the material capabilities and limitations of photography shift, new questions continually emerge about the role of photographic removal and photographic resilience in constricting cultural climates.

This symposium offers a platform for scholarship that investigates the adaptability of photography and photo history in the face of constraints, be them cultural, governmental, institutional, editorial, individual, or otherwise. What do historians, curators, and photographers do when limitations are placed on their work, and what do the limitations themselves reveal about photography? Relatedly, when is restriction, refusal, or withdrawal protective, strategic, or empowering? Finally, what, if anything, has changed about how the medium navigates social or cultural boundaries—what can we learn from how practitioners have done this in the past that might shed light on present-day questions? We welcome interdisciplinary approaches, and we especially encourage international scholars to submit.

We invite submissions of 15-minute talks related to topics such as:

- Photographic exhibitions in complex political or social contexts
- Collecting institutions' navigation of political pressures
- Image circulation and content moderation on social media
- Privacy and surveillance
- Photographic archives and repatriation
- Photojournalism, political figures, war imagery
- Image withdrawal, refusal, or veiling as a form of justice, resistance, or repair
- Challenges in conducting scholarship on controversial imagery
- Cancelled exhibitions, publications, and public history projects
- Archives and historical erasure
- Cancelled negatives, "killed" negatives

- The aesthetics of photographic concealment—the blur, the black rectangle, the crop

We also, of course, encourage approaches to these questions beyond what we have outlined here.

To submit, please send a 250-word abstract and your CV to photographynetworksymposium@gmail.com by May 31, 2026.

Reference:

CFP: Vision and Veiling (online, 5-7 Nov 26). In: ArtHist.net, Apr 13, 2026 (accessed May 28, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/52205>>.