Photography and Privacy (Leicester/online, 14-15 Jun 27)

Leicester, De Montfort University / Online, Jun 14–15, 2027
Deadline: Nov 30, 2026

Prof Gil Pasternak

Photography and Privacy: Making, Negotiating, and Contesting what is Private.

Privacy has never been a fixed or self-evident condition. Its meanings, boundaries, and claims have changed with shifting social values, legal frameworks, political institutions, and technologies, and photography has been deeply implicated in this history. Since its emergence in the nineteenth century, photography has represented private life and threatened its boundaries while simultaneously helping to shape what could be understood as private, who could claim privacy, and how the boundaries between private and public life could be drawn, crossed, defended, or renegotiated.

For the PHRC's 2027 Annual Conference, we invite papers and practice-based investigations that explore the intertwined histories of photography and privacy from the nineteenth century to the present. The conference intends to take photography seriously not only as a means of representing private life, but mostly as a medium and set of practices through which ideas and experiences of privacy have been produced and transformed.

Photographs have made possible new forms of intimacy, self-representation, memory, and personal possession, while at the same time enabling exposure, surveillance, identification, administration, publicity, and commercial exploitation. Moreover, they have circulated between homes and streets, studios and institutions, albums and archives, newspapers and courts, museums and databases, continually entering new relations of visibility, access, and control. In this respect, the conference is equally concerned with the changing conditions under which photographs are made, viewed, circulated, preserved, and controlled, and with the ways individuals, communities, and institutions have negotiated these conditions.

Papers and presentations might focus on photographs, photographers, photographic practices, archives, collections, technologies, institutions, or legal cases, while also considering the wider historical and theoretical questions they illuminate. In this respect, we invite historical, comparative, transnational, theoretical, and interdisciplinary approaches, including contributions that bring photographic history into dialogue with diverse field of research, such as art history, visual and media studies, sociology, anthropology, practice-based research, philosophy, ethics, law, archival and museum studies, science and technology studies, and others. We especially welcome proposals for 15-minute presentations that engage with, respond to, or build upon current debates in the following areas:

- Photography and the making of private life;
- Portraiture, identity, and the right to be seen or unseen;
- Intersections of photography, law, and the boundaries of privacy;
- Photographic technologies and the possibilities of watching, identifying, and governing;
- Photographic circulation between personal collections and public environments, and the right to be forgotten;
- Photographic negotiations of vulnerability, dignity, intimacy, and exposure;
- Privacy and photographic practices in digital platforms, networked images, metadata, biometric technologies, artificial intelligence and similar novel forms of image circulation and analysis.

These areas are intended as points of departure rather than limits on the scope of the conference. We welcome proposals that develop related questions, introduce other historical or geographical perspectives, or bring unexpected photographic practices and archives into conversation with the history of privacy.

Confirmed Keynote Speaker
Professor Sarah Parsons (York University, Toronto, Canada)

Submission Guidelines

Please submit a proposal of no more than 300 words (in .doc or .pdf format) to phrc@dmu.ac.uk by Monday 30th November 2026.

Your proposal should include your name, contact details, institutional affiliation (if applicable), a publishable biographical note of 80-120 words, and up to five keywords.

Kindly name the file with your full name (e.g. Smith_Jane_PHRC27.pdf; Smith_John_PHRC27.-doc).

For additional information and updates, please visit the conference webpage at: https://photographichistory.wordpress.com/annual-conference-2027/

Reference:
CFP: Photography and Privacy (Leicester/online, 14-15 Jun 27). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 21, 2026 (accessed Nov 24, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/54704>.