Session at EAUH Conference 2014 (Lisbon, 6-9 Sep 14)

Lisbon, Portugal, Sep 3–06, 2014
Deadline: Oct 15, 2013

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PAPER CITIES: URBAN PORTRAITS in PHOTOGRAPHIC BOOKS

Specialist Session at the 12th International Conference on Urban History

Cities have always been incredibly photogenic places. Panoramic cityscapes configure an early and important photographic domain, while the so called ‘street photography’ persisted as one of the most popular genres within the documentary style. From the very initial years of the photographic medium, to the later democratic turn of photographic practices, or to the recent age of digital and immaterial pictures, cities have remained attractive subjects for the photographer’s eye.

While photography reaffirms its central role in visually conveying and proposing urban identities, the book – and especially the photographic book – also appears as a crucial agent in the historic processes of city representation. Though cities seem always too complex to be accurately portrayed, the book device carries supplementary qualities for such a task: not only is it invested with an ancient authority related to knowledge and truthfulness, but its narrative nature also turns it into the perfect medium by which city stories can be told. Additionally, photographic books on cities are also fruitful domains where visual and textual messages meet to create more complex and complete depictions of urban life, often combining poetic and objective accounts through the personal voices of writers and photographers.

With regard to urban and city representation, and especially after the documentary vogue of the 1930s, the encounter between literature and photography has been particularly fruitful, generating outstanding examples like 'Paris de Nuit' (Brassaï and P. Morand, 1933), 'La Banlieue de Paris' (R. Doisneau and B. Cendrars, 1949), or 'Lisboa: Cidade Triste e Alegre' (Lisbon: a Sad and Joyful City, V. Palla and C. Martins, 1959), to name but a few. The prolific production of photographic books raises imperative questions: How can a city be visually read in the pages of a book? How do photo-books on cities contribute and influence historical discourse? Can a history of a city be told by its book-shaped portraits? What kind of word-and-image relationships are present in photobooks and how do they reinforce identity building phenomena? How are we to address the categories of documentary and fiction in these particular city portraits?

In this session, we are particularly interested in papers dealing with these questions and addressing book-shaped portraits of cities since 1900 to the present. In order to examine this phenomenon from a wider perspective, we also welcome presentations covering different geographic

contexts and encourage comparative approaches from varied disciplinary backgrounds.
Keywords: Photography; City Portraits; Books; Word and Image; Urban Representation

Please submit a 300-WORD ABSTRACT online, via the EAUH 2014 website http://www.eauh2014.fcsh.unl.pt/

Deadline for paper proposals submission: October 15, 2013
Notification of paper acceptance: December 15, 2013

Specialist Session organized by SUSANA S. MARTINS (Portugal) - Institute for Art History / Universidade Nova de Lisboa and ANNE REVERSEAU (Belgium) - Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

Reference:
CFP: Session at EAUH Conference 2014 (Lisbon, 6-9 Sep 14). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 16, 2013 (accessed Nov 19, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/5938>.