

**Prof Helen Westgeest**, University of Leiden

## **Photography Bridging Great Distances in Time and Place**

This presentation discusses some arguments from the theory of photography and visual researches by photographers that interrogate concepts of time and place to demonstrate that photography is able to visualize history and to bridge great distances in time and place.

Analogue photography is said to deal with the past, 'that-has-been' (Roland Barthes's famous phrase), whereas digital photography deals, according to some authors, with 'possibilities', 'how the world could be', i.e. the future. As a result, current literature about theory of photography mainly focuses on the ability of digital photography to present a place and moment which does not exist, or does not exist yet. There appears to be hardly any interest in the question what the abilities of photography are to photograph the past, in the meaning of to photograph what passed without being photographed or even visualizing pre-photographic ages.

**Dr. Iro Katsaridou**, Museum of Byzantine Culture, Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Tourism

**Dr. Anastasia Kontogiorgi**, Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Directorate of Modern Greek Cultural Heritage

### **Commodifying Classical Antiquity: Greek photography and archaeological ruins**

This paper focuses on the changes that take place in the iconography of the ancient ruins in Greek photography, from the early photographic representations of the Athenian Acropolis until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century tourist advertisements.

First photographed by foreign travelers in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the Greek landscape almost exclusively regarded ruins of Classical Greece. Stripped of its contemporary identity, the Greek landscape was represented as an uninhabited scenery full of “sublime” ancient ruins, depicted with pseudo-scientific accuracy. To supply the needs of the “erudite” foreign travelers, educated through extensive readings of Greek and Latin classical literature, an entire market of photographic souvenirs was created. Therefore, the Greek photographers depicting the landscape of their homeland in the next decades were urged to appropriate the “philhellenist”, “colonial” gaze of the foreigners, conforming, thus, to the market demands for Romanticized photographic commodities.

The way the archaeological ruins are represented in Greek photography changes with the advent of mass tourism, mainly after World War II. As paid summer vacation was gradually established by the post-war Western welfare state, a tourist campaign initiated by the state-run, newly founded Greek Tourist Organization prompted the foreign visitors to discover Greece as one of the last “lost paradises”. In this new “product”, archaeology just added a “picturesque” tone to the overall representation of a seaside, sun-bathed resort.

Covering a period from the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, this paper seeks to examine the changes taking place in the photography of the ancient Greek ruins, having as a starting point their status as commodities. Tracing how these changes are reflected in the aesthetic choices made by the photographers of every period, the paper also attempts to shed light on, contextualize and, thus, interpret the various ways the country’s history is visualized through time.

**Giovanni Fragalà**, Istituto per i beni archeologici e monumentali - CNR

**The photographer, the criminal and the archaeologist:  
Perspectives and suggestions for a syntax for archaeological photography**

Does a syntax exist for the language of archaeological photography? Moving from this question and comparing archaeological photography with that of criminal, the paper wishes to explore some aspects of archaeological photography, i.e., photography as a study, photography as a historical document or artistic work, searching rules and models that have described and defined, from middle 1800s up to today, the archaeological artifacts. The concept of photographic syntax, commonly enunciated, as dependent on the technical instrument, in most cases seems not to express a language of its own of archaeological photography; not tied necessarily to the camera used or to the technique or the mind of the photographer, but to the function that, time after time, becomes attributed to them by the archaeologist, by the historian or by the artist in general.

**Pool Andries**, Director FotoMuseum Antwerpen

**Prof. José Benjamim Picado Sousa e Silva**, Universidade Federal Fluminense (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

**From Instantaneity to the State of Affairs: landscape and stability in the visual discourse of photojournalism”**

This article intends to examine the question of narrative functions attributed to the *motifs* of stability in photojournalism, departing from the relationships between the visual topic of landscapes and the concept of sublimity in pictorial representation (taking Louis Marin’s analysis of Niclas Poussin’s depiction of nature as an heuristic model). Addressing the issue of historical couverture in photojournalism, we take the example of two photographers (Richard Peter senior and James Nechtwey), with their respective visual essays on the aftermath of the attack on Dresden (in World War II) and on New York (the World Trade Center, 9/11), as a standpoint for the analysis of the relationships between stability and visual discourse in photography.

**Dr. Henrik Gustafsson**, University of Bergen

## **Confronting Absence: Imagination and Excavation**

My paper will discuss instances where landscape, for lack of something better it seems, is called upon to bear witness – and where the act of photographing sites where history looms large yet humans are conspicuously absent becomes a form of belated witnessing of what is no longer there. This trend has been labeled ‘Late Photography’ (David Company) or ‘Post-reportage’ (Ian Walker) to describe a reaction against the immediacy and spectacle of mainstream news toward a more distanced and disengaged process. Instead of pursuing the “decisive moment” of traditional photo journalism, the late photographers turn their cameras to the aftermath of violence and trauma. Instead of giving us narratives of victims and aggressors, they bring the conflict down to its everyday structures and materials. In this, late photography combines the clinical attitude of forensic photography with the contemplative mode of landscape art.

Joel Sternfeld’s *On This Site*, Anthony Hernandez’ *Landscapes for the Homeless*, Mikael Levins *War Story*, and the entire oeuvre of Sophie Ristelhueber and Paul Seawright, all raise the question of how to photograph something where the referent has been removed. The effect of their images derives from the disjunctive relation between the mute surface of the land and the gruesome narratives it hides and harbors. This disproportion between site and event keeps referring the viewer back to the limits of knowledge and explanation. On the one hand, these works visualize the medium’s limitations to support memory, to furnish evidence, and to commemorate. On the other hand, by marking out these absences, they work like memorials; invoking silence, creating a void for the spectator to fill, and confiding to the beholder the ability to respond. Thus, they require an activity that derives from what we don’t see – they require our imagination.

Whereas the Western landscape tradition historically has aspired to turn physics into metaphysics; matter into spirit; and natural resources into supernatural resources, these works seem to gravitate toward the terrestrial. Considered as a conflict between *terra* (earth, ground) and *territory* (the domination and domestication of land), these representations balance between dense materiality and iconographic traditions. Avoiding didactics, rarely clarifying their aims or reaching conclusions, they nonetheless aspire to access histories, structures and processes hidden from view. The paper will discuss how these returns to the scene of crime attest to the limits of historical representation while stubbornly resisting the disintegration of forensic traces and the fading of memory.

**Dr. Peter Muir**, Manchester School of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University

**Innovation in Art and Design): <http://www.miriad.mmu.ac.uk/>**

Dematerialised, insubstantial and ghostly in their presence, Shimon Attie's artwork *The Writing on the Wall* (1991-1993) consists of images of Berlin's Jewish inhabitants photographed in the 1920s and 1930s, which, transformed into transparencies are superimposed upon the doorways, dark, empty streets, and warehouse walls of the Scheunenviertel district of Berlin (its Jewish quarter during the 1920s and 1930s) as it appears between 1991. Attie projects these archival images onto the exact locations where the photographs were originally taken, trying, as it were, to 'rebuild' fragments of an annihilated world on the very site of its own ruins: thus recalling or summoning up its very particular historical catastrophe. An understanding of history is lodged within these sites of memory and its specific characteristics are activated as something becomes present in its passing away, or better, when something lives in its death. Such an understanding imagines history as a form of after-life, an after-life (or after-image) "whose pulses can still be felt in the present." By re-photographing the projections and the architectural and urban space of the Scheunenviertel, Attie makes layered images that carry forward this afterlife as critique. This layering, this folding speaks of an orphic space that becomes both a site of memorial and an uneasy grave for the living dead. Within this layering or condensation of past and present, time is no longer understood exclusively as continuous and linear, but rather as spatial—an imagistic space. When considering these images the words of Walter Benjamin come to mind, "...the beholder feels an irresistible urge to search the picture for the tiny spark of contingency, of the here and now, with which reality has (so to speak) seared the subject, to find the inconspicuous spot where in the immediacy of that long forgotten moment the future nests so eloquently that we, looking back may discover it." It is the task of this paper to bring to the surface this spot or trace of contingency that links the past with the future present (the future's presence) in images from *The Writing on the Wall*.

**Dr. Leen Engelen**, Media and Design Academy, University College Limburg  
**Prof. Marjan Sterckx**, Ghent University & PHL University College, Belgium

*Remembering Edith and Gabrielle. The picture postcard as photographic lieu de Mémoire*

This paper deals with the mnemonic qualities of photographic representations of monuments in picture postcards. These postcards could be seen as specific photographic *lieux de mémoire*, as defined by Pierre Nora. We would like to argue that a multiplication of *lieux de mémoire* takes place within picture postcards of statues, turning them into objects of memory *par excellence*. First, the monuments and their specific location in the city function as a literal/physical place of memory, reminding passers-by of past events and people. Second, starting with the official inauguration, commemoration ceremonies have enlivened memories throughout the years and continue to do so. Third, the picture postcards of those statues, often photographed shortly after their unveiling, function as photographic sites of remembrance. Specific representational strategies such as *mise-en-scène* and point-of view guide our reading of the image as a site of memory. Archives or collections of picture postcards, public or private, form a fourth layer of memory in which the postcards re-materialise as real objects of remembrance. Especially so in the case of no longer existent or meanwhile replaced monuments where the postcard as archival document replaces the actual statue as *lieu de mémoire* and becomes the sole trace of history and memory.

These different layers of memory work especially well in picture postcards of First World War statues, dating themselves from the interwar period, when memories were still vivid. As a case study we deal with picture postcards of two World War heroines executed by the German enemy, the British nurse Edith Cavell (1865-1915) and the Belgian spy Gabrielle Petit (1893-1916), whose statues were erected in the early 1920s in Brussels and London. In this paper we will particularly focus on the representational strategies used, specifically on those choices contributing to aspects of memory and commemoration. This will allow us to re-consider the picture postcard as a photographic 'double' of the actual *lieu de mémoire*, highlighting new layers of meaning and thus contributing to the archive of visual memories of the actual event as well as of the statue.

**Dr. Bruno Notteboom**, Ghent University

Public and private histories. Charles Buls' travel photography around 1900

Charles Buls (1837-1914), mayor of Brussels during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, was a fervent traveller and amateur photographer in his free time. However, most of his images were destined for the public eye. His travel albums were not only meant to be seen by close relatives, but in a larger social and professional context as well. Buls was an active contributor to tourist and photography journals, such as the *Bulletin du Touring Club de Belgique* and the *Bulletin de l'Association Belge de Photographie*. In addition, he gave numerous illustrated lectures on his travels. In line with the tradition of the Grand Tour, Buls focused in these travelogues on historical monuments and sites. His images fitted in the existing iconographic tradition: history was represented as a succession of isolated objects.

Buls' archive contains also a limited number of photographic series which were not meant to be published or to be part of travel albums. They only served as private documentation. The most extensive of these series were made on a journey to Sicily in 1902. By means of a comparison between his 'public' and 'private' images, we demonstrate how Buls constructed two different attitudes towards heritage. In contrast to his published photos, the images of Sicily depict a city in which history is merely the background for daily life. The reaction against the isolation of monuments and the interaction between the pedestrian and the historic urban tissue was the main idea in Buls' theory on urbanism, published as *Esthétique des Villes* in 1894. The paper rises the following question: if the photos of Sicily are a striking evocation of Buls' ideas on the role of history for the city, why did this kind of imagery not find its way to the public sphere in journals or planning documents?

Visual Presentation  
Karin Borghouts, Artist Photographer



**Prof. John C Welchman**, University of California

### **History and Time in the American Vernacular: Mike Kelley's *Day is Done*"**

The carnivalesque profusion of Mike Kelley's *Day is Done: Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction #2–32* (2004–2005) offers a phantasmatic reconstitution of recent history in the American vernacular produced at the interface of documentary information and imaginative extrapolation. The project was founded on the tessellation of blanknesses that form the partial un-recall of Kelley's memory of the educational institutions he attended, from kindergarten to Cal Arts, from youth to university—which he assembled as an architectural model in *Educational Complex* (1995). These absent scenes of social formation become the organizing principle for a more generalized regimen of repressed memories, a dream-book of traumatic episodes transacted in the über-institutional space that frames the exhibition. Kelley has engineered a panorama of repressed episodes precipitated by an iconic assemblage of yearbook photographs, representing different types of generic activity—religious, motivational, costume, equestrian and so on—which he willfully recalls into art. He kick-starts the tumult of *Day is Done* with what amounts to a gigantic evacuation, a *de-mise-en scène*, in which the subject-matter is always already available but at the same time eventuates as pure projection—a paradox caught up at the heart of the testimonial histories of Repressed Memory Syndrome that offer another point of commencement.

One of Kelley's achievements here is a kind of contentious obverse—and scintillating retort—to that round of "re-photographic" practice that so gripped the art world from the late 1970s through the 1980s. Both Kelley and Sherrie Levine, for example, begin with a photograph, one ultra-vernacular, the other "high" or "fine." But while Levine's gestures of singular appropriation thrive almost exclusively on the critical context that underwrites their reception—recycling it through questions of originality, authorship and the copy which viewers and critics extend—Kelley subjects his found photographs to social and formal extrapolation, overloading them with a giddy combination of faux-logical implications and situational projection. Levine inters the photograph in the coffin of its authorship; Kelley resurrects its anonymous protagonists into a voracious afterlife of apocryphal dimensions.