

After Post-Photography 7 - Presence and Absence

International conference on visual studies, history and theory of photography

2-4 June 2022, European University (St. Petersburg, Russia // online)

Deadline: Feb 28, 2022

Maybe we never depended on photographic media as much as we do since early 2020. Probably we never looked so often, on so many occasions and at so many photographic images, as when wave after pandemic wave crashed into the world as we knew it. The less we could physically interact, the more we did by means of visual media. Instead of traveling we watched documentaries and were comforted a bit when videos showed a pair of dolphins swimming through Venice's Canale Grande where these animals had been absent for ages. We perused old family albums or sifted through the thousands of pictures on our hard drives. As libraries were closed, generous colleagues would snap page after page of book chapters someone else in the world was desperate to read. Our seminars were replaced by screens from which the participants' faces stared frontally, each one an involuntary panoptic jailer and inmate. And the breakout rooms of conferences were hardly a surrogate for the drafty hallways where gossip was exchanged and wild new research ideas developed over lukewarm coffee. The pandemic drama found its visual metaphors and allegories in the photograph of an Italian nurse collapsing after too many shifts, a short video of the former German tennis star Boris Becker applauding care workers from the balcony of his luxury mansion and demonstrations against the pandemic, lockdowns, vaccinations and the state as such. And as usual, many of its aspects remained invisible – the rise of domestic violence and alcoholism, the boring routine work in hospitals, the terrors of proximity in overcrowded camps, the dying in squalor of which there was rather more than less.

In these and many more respects, a multitude of medialized relations of presence and absence and photography or – on broader terms – of visibility were negotiated within the framework of the pandemic. But of course these relations did not only emerge through the pandemic alone. In fact they are at the very core of images in general, and of photographs in particular. As photographic media shape our understanding of the world outside our immediate vicinity, their practices and politics of presence and absence are fundamental to modernity and its societies. Both practices and politics obviously depend upon what the images show. But in equal measure they also depend on how images are produced, distributed and reach out to their audiences. Thus, photographic presence and absence can happen in a lot of different ways. Photographic images can be applied to highlight, generate, select and obscure persons, objects, events and relations; they can render them special, ordinary, normal or boring. They can address individuals or everybody, they can aim for eternity or ephemerality. How all this was, is, or can be done depends not only on intentions but also on the technologies of the photographic media in question. These technologies however are neither objective nor are they neutral. How they cast the visible - and invisible - into photographic images depends upon the common politics and practices of visibility: if a team of engineers develops a facial recognition systems and trains it with portraits of predominantly white men, it is hardly surprising that it fails to identify or even recognize non-white persons.

Under these conditions, possible topics include, but are not limited to

- The image is the real thing: Photographic replacements
- Skype, Zoom and BBB: Visual telepresence and other panoptical experiences
- This can't be me: Non-representation through photography
- Mobile presence: The smartphone as representation of the self
- Photographic decay: What do faded photographs tell?

- Technical blindness - what photography can't see or show
- Photographic media and their audiences
- You'll only see this once: Technical ephemerality
- Photographs of what never has been: Retouching, rendering and other technologies of photo-realism
- Pseudo-photography: The photographic aesthetics of sonographs, tomographs and other imaging methods

As it was the case with previous conferences however, After Post-Photography is driven by a general curiosity in subjects of photography. Thus, there is only ground rule for submitting a paper to After Post-Photography: If you're doing Sociology, Nuclear Physics, Ethnology, Computer Sciences, Gender Studies, Meteorology, Law, Memory Studies, Criminology, Architecture, Archaeology, Botany, Art History, Mathematics, Numismatics, Astronomy, Game Studies, Oenology, Art History or any other discipline from science and humanities and your research involves photography in the broadest sense, we are happy to receive your paper. Please submit your application, including a short summary of your paper (250-400 words) only in English no later than February 28, 2022. Use the following link: <https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=app7> ; do not send submissions per eMail. Note that you need to register at the Easychair website in order to submit your application. Should you like to get in touch with us prior to your submission, please write to app@mur.at ; we will get back to you within two or three days and if need be are also happy to talk to you via Zoom or Skype.

There is no participation fee for the conference, neither for speakers nor for guests; should you like to support the conference however, let us know. As the pandemic continues, traveling options are impossible to predict which is why we plan for a hybrid conference. If your paper is accepted and you would like to come to St. Petersburg we regret that we can't sponsor traveling or accommodation but can help you finding a place to stay. We will also provide you with an invitation in case you need a visa.

The working languages of the conference are Russian and English, and during the conference, both papers and discussions will be translated. For programs of After Post-Photography conferences since 2015, please see www.after-post.photography

We would sincerely appreciate it if you would circulate the call to your own networks and other mailing lists.

Organizing committee After Post Photography 7: Olga Annanurova, Maria Gourieva, Olga Davydova, Natalia Mazour, Daria Panaiotti, Friedrich Tietjen

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