

THE PHOTOGRAPHERS' GALLERY

Urban Photography: Making, Researching, Teaching Monday 13 November

10.30 – 15.00

A symposium of contemporary approaches and debates within the visual and pedagogical practice of urban photography

2017 marks the tenth anniversary of the *Urban Encounters* conference, held annually at Tate Britain and Goldsmiths University London. Throughout the years, there has been considerable interest in urban photography and how teachers, lecturers and social researchers approach this interdisciplinary area of practice. How is such a range of practices 'taught', and where does such learning take place? What insights and understanding about contemporary urban space is achieved through urban ethnography and the cultural geographies of place?

This day of discussion features artists, urbanists and academics across two panels exploring *Teaching Photography* and *The City as Playground*. Featuring Senior Lecturers in Photography at the University of West London Peter Bennett and Theresa Mikuriya; Paul Halliday, convenor of the MA Photography and Urban Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London; photographers and Goldsmiths Visiting Fellows Gill Golding and David Kendall; and Linda Lai, Associate Professor at the City University of Hong Kong's School of Creative Media.

Organised as part of UrbanPhotoFest 2017

Schedule:

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 10.30 | Registration |
| 10.50 | Opening remarks |
| 11.00 | Panel One: <i>Teaching Photography</i> |
| 11.00 | Peter Bennett <i>Exploring Photography and the Urban Environment</i> |
| 11.20 | Gill Golding <i>Walking the City: A Learning Experience</i> |
| 11.40 | Paul Halliday <i>Closeness as Ethnographic Metaphor: Teaching Street Photography in a Time of Distance and Erasure</i> |
| 12.00 | Audience discussion |
| 12.30 | Lunch |

- 13.30 **Panel Two: *The City as Playground***
- 13.30 **Junko Theresa Mikuriya** "*As beautiful as the chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella*": *How to teach Surrealism through Photography*
- 13.50 **Linda Chiu-han Lai** *Videography: a Materialist, Intermedia Game*
- 14.10 **David Kendall** *Atmospheric Infrastructures and Sensorial Cityscapes: Discursive and Collective Approaches to Photographic Practice and Research in Cities*
- 14.30 Audience discussion
- 15.00 Symposium ends.

Abstracts & Biographies

Panel One: *Teaching Photography*

Peter Bennett *Exploring Photography and the Urban Environment*

This talk considers a range of ideas and practices employed in a university setting in order to engage students with an exploration of photography and the urban environment. The city is in a state of constant flux, as is our understanding of it. This makes it a rich and inspiring topic for students to engage with from both a practical and theoretical perspective. The talk examines a range of conceptual ideas that help to challenge students' understanding of how they experience the urban environment. It also shows practical examples of the work students have produced in relation to these ideas. Themes covered include the idea of the camera as an apparatus for seeing and transforming vision, the effect of mechanised forms of transportation in reframing the city and ways in which the built environment can change our perception of space.

Peter Bennett is a photographic artist and academic. He is a senior lecturer and course leader in BA Photography at the University of West London and has many years of teaching and industry experience in photography. He has an MA and MPhil in Photography from the University of Brighton and is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. His recent photographic practice explores the visualization of urban space in past and future time. Previous projects have examined the book, the sea and the materiality of the photograph, as metaphoric and material repositories of memory.

Gill Golding *Walking the City: A Learning Experience*

This talk draws upon Golding's experience as an urban photographer, walker and educator who utilises walking as a teaching and research methodology. She considers how an experiential learning approach, in which the contemporary city is encountered through an embodied practice, can enable a plurality of perspectives to become visible, thus provoking a critical engagement with the urban space. This method of social inquiry encourages a perception of urban space as a dynamic and constantly changing environment, thereby widening the analytic frame. Understandings and insights into a multiplicity of stories can be gained, which open up the potential for new processes of making.

Gill Golding is a teacher (former head-teacher) and urban photographer whose visual research interests lie in the field of post-industrial cities, particularly with an emphasis on regeneration, gentrification and sustainability. Golding is a Visiting Research Fellow at Goldsmiths, University of London, Education Director of the Urban Photographers Association, Organiser of the International Urban Photography Summer School and Chair of London Independent Photography.

Paul Halliday *Closeness as Ethnographic Metaphor: Teaching Street Photography in a Time of Distance and Erasure*

This talk focuses on some of the broader issues around teaching street photography within the context of *critical urbanism*. Much of what passes as contemporary street photography theory is little more than collective self-referencing about what counts as the 'correct way' to do practice. The UK has seen a steady decline in relevant discussions about how street photography might offer something different from the more traditional 'smash and grab' approach favoured by so many British photographers. Such practices are often thought of as 'brave' and, according to Halliday, amount to 'a distortion of Capa's dictum – 'if your pictures aren't good enough, it's because you're not close enough'.

Halliday argues for a politically engaged street visual practice that reflects a critique of neoliberal orthodoxies, many of which are closely tied into the worlds of advertising and commercial photography. He critiques the parlous state of street photography in the UK as it becomes increasingly self-referential, predictable, reliant on cultural and national stereotypes and dependent on a world obsessed with celebrity. In other words, *closeness* can also be thought of an ethnographic metaphor, and the challenge of teaching street photography is to revitalize a form that had, and has the potential for sociological engagement and critique.

Paul Halliday is a photographer, film-maker and urbanist based at Goldsmiths, University of London, where he is course leader of the MA Photography and Urban Cultures. He is a member of UPA - the Urban Photographers' Association, and creative director of UrbanPhotoFest. His photographic work focuses on people, landscapes and things in urban spaces. After studying photojournalism and fine art film at LCC and Saint Martins, he studied anthropology, archaeology and art history at Goldsmiths, Cambridge and Oxford universities. His exhibition *Interrogation Room* at Deptford Old Police Station is part of UrbanPhotoFest 2017.

Panel Two: The City as Playground

Junko Theresa Mikuriya "*As beautiful as the chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella*": How to teach Surrealism through Photography

In this talk, Theresa Mikuriya discusses how photography can be used as a pedagogical tool for students to understand Surrealism not only as an artistic or literary movement, but more importantly, as a mode of life. She looks at the ways in which the practice of Surrealist strategies via photography can deepen one's engagement with the urban environment. Through the presentation of a case study, she discusses how students engage with key Surrealist concepts such as automatism, objective chance and the marvellous through experimentation and exploration of the built environment.

Junko Theresa Mikuriya is Senior Lecturer in Photography at the London School of Film, Media and Design, University of West London. Theresa has more than two decades of experience as a freelance photographer in the fashion and music industries in Asia, specializing in album covers and fashion editorial work in Taipei and Hong Kong. She has a PhD in Cultural Studies from Goldsmiths, University of London and a Masters in *Lettres modernes* from the University of Paris IV, Sorbonne. She is the recipient of the University of Kent's Faculty of Humanities Teaching Prize in 2009 for her darkroom photography module offered in the History of Art Department. Theresa is the author of *A History of Light: The Idea of Photography* (Bloomsbury 2016), a book that investigates the relation between photography, light and philosophy.

Linda Chiu-han Lai *Videography: a materialist, intermedia game*

In a time when image-making is a ubiquitous activity for almost everyone, Lai asks her art students what makes their practice different. Between mainstream moving image for a mythicized pop audience and an often alienating, misleading domain of experimental cinema, she critically interpolates through a series of purposeful, philosophical and ethically constructed image-making exercises. Invoking the idea of *objectile* and *projectile*, Lai proposes a videographic practice by which students explore every image, or moving image sequence, as at once raw material and document, capable of evolving as an image event that discloses hidden forms and presences. "Micro narratives" is then the very term which supersedes plot-based story by description, that is, the flow of perceptual time and the evolving status of a sight-and-sound situation, underlined by an ethical commitment to stretched perception and cognition and refreshed attentiveness, which is the necessary role of art in society.

In this presentation, Lai discusses a series of videographic tasks that turns the above into open experiences, following the principles of rule-based creativity (working with constraints), highlighting "discovery" over "representation". The city itself is not only a playground for visual magic, but also a laboratory to maximize technological affordances to generate new experiences and new knowledge of the

urban space. Art students are therefore encouraged to be more than just stakeholders, but to be a re-grounder as well in image making.

Linda Chiu-han Lai, Associate Professor of Intermedia Arts at the City University of Hong Kong's School of Creative Media, is a research-based interdisciplinary artist. Her teaching covers critical theory, experimental videography, contemporary and media art history and media archaeology. She founded the Writing Machine Collective in 2004, a Hong Kong-based new media art group, and initiated the Floating Projects in 2015 to explore issues of sustainability and survival in art. Though broadly known for her works in videography in international art venues, she uses different artistic mediums to turn art-making into criticism, history-writing, gaming, and voyages of discovery. Her works address the politics of language and narrativity, grounded in a feminist sensibility that questions hierarchies and boundaries in art and culture. A large-scale installation of hers is now permanent collection at the Power Station (home for the Shanghai Biennale). She just completed two site-specific versions of a moving-image installation, "Mnemonic Archiving: a Dispersive Monument," at Pearl Lam Galleries, Singapore (2016) and Hong Kong (2017).

David Kendall *Atmospheric Infrastructures and Sensorial Cityscapes: Discursive and Collective Approaches to Photographic Practice and Research in Cities*

Discursive and collective approaches to photographic practice facilitate cooperation and collaboration. Therefore, enabling discussions about the social, political and ethical implications of participation and authorship in photography and urban research. Citing projects produced in Paris, Doha, New York and London, the works consider how photographic practice encourages experiential learning and 'play' in cities, in conjunction with information and communications technology (ICT) and architecture. In addition, these projects produce creative environments that explore the perceptual silences (or interludes) that exist between the places depicted in photographs, and the geographical locations where shared sensorial and technological processes emerge, and transform ocular and auditory landscapes. As a consequence, pedagogical analysis and narrative exchange evolve in the cityscape, and are revealed through audio-visual and sonic media. Thus, new conversations that question communal awareness, embodiment and spatial dissonance are opened up and made manifest in architectural sites through atmospheric interactions between people, structural design and digital infrastructure in the built environment.

David Kendall's practice explores how spatial, economic and design initiatives, as well as participatory practices, combine to encourage social and spatial interconnections or dissonance in cities. His photographs, spatial research and collaborative projects have been exhibited and presented internationally including the British Library, UK, Jüdisches Museum Berlin, Germany, Centro Cultural Manuel Gómez Morín, Santiago de Queretaro, México, documenta 14, Germany, Tate Britain, UK and Institut français London, UK. Kendall is a visiting research fellow within the Centre for Urban and Community Research, Goldsmiths, University of London, UK.