

Talks on everyday
imaging vol. 2:
The Self-Centred and
the Networked

Abstracts

Thursday 13 Feb 2025,

15.00 - 17.30

Contemporary vernacular photography and capitalism

Ben Burbridge, Professor of Visual Culture, University of Sussex, UK

Extracorporeal Images

How do we think and do visual culture in an age of networked computation? Can networked images provide opportunities to map the complexities of a global capitalist system? What would a socially mediated world look like if it was an image? This lecture looks to recent art practices for some potential answers.

Hille Koskela, Professor of Geography, University of Turku, Finland

Empowering Exhibitionism in Surveillance Society

Hille Koskela's talk takes contemporary surveillance society as a starting point and discusses various artistic ways to challenge it. In contrast to being targets of surveillance and submitting to passively being observed, people increasingly play an active role in the production of images. The deliberate exposure of the self has shifted the surveillance model. Webcams create new social practices and change old ones, and they have functions different from—or even opposite to—surveillance and control. Webcams are at the core of post-Foucauldian surveillance theory.

Many artists criticize surveillance directly. In this presentation, however, the focus is on artists that consider the surveilled subject not as an object but as an active subject. Many artists use webcams in order to discuss how images can strengthen a subject's self-esteem. Webcam art often balances on the line between pornography and self-portrayal, it blurs distinctions between art, life and porn. Refusal of following social norms can be developed to something new—to a new theoretical path in surveillance studies. Deliberate exhibitionism may work as an effective form of resistance. Artists have shown that exhibitionism can be explained in ways which detach it from its conformist relation to perversion.

Artists whose work is discussed are, for example, Cheryl Sourkes, Nye Thompson, Leah Schrager, Molly Soda, Petra Cortright, Sessa Omoregie, Maya Man and Vex Ashley.

The ecological footprint of contemporary vernacular imagery

Nadia Bozak, Associate Professor, University of Toronto, Canada

Where Did the Sun Go?: Ways of Seeing, Photographing, and Reflecting Upon a Solar Eclipse (digital presentation)

This talk explores the experience of collectively watching and photographing the total solar eclipse that passed over a band of North America, from Mexico to my part of eastern North America, on April 8, 2024. The much-hyped experience compelled seasoned eclipse-chasers and the average citizen who dwelled in the eclipse's path to become excited about astronomy, solar physics, and the possibilities and limits of watching and photographing the

eclipse itself. From school children fashioning pin-hole cameras to safely view the eclipse to public libraries distributing free eclipse glasses, those who were embroiled in the excitement were thinking about the human eye and the power of the sun to damage it, as well as the best way to capture an eclipse-themed selfie on our smartphone. Thus, the North American eclipse of April 2024 was not only a collective viewing experience, it was an exercise in mass photography, with each image capturing a unique vantage point of the Sun's corona as the moon passed between Sun and Earth. And, because the eclipse was so widely photographed, the event bears witness to what is arguably over-consumption of the image, particularly as the amount of energy needed to supply "the cloud" itself, where our trillion digital images are housed, negatively contributes to climate change. Of course, a discussion of energy, climate change, and a heating planet leads us back to the spark of this talk: the Sun, its power, and its complex relationship to our planet, Earth.

Screening "Death of a Fantastic Machine."

Axel Danielson & Maximilien Van Aertryck, filmmakers.

Death of a Fantastic Machine (short film)

In just 200 years, we've gone from the first photograph to a world with 45 billion cameras. Through a chronological journey using only archival footage, filmmakers Axel Danielson & Maximilien Van Aertryck (directors of "Ten Meter Tower") explore humanity's use of this revolutionary technology and how it has shaped our behavior and society.

Friday 14 Feb 2025,

11.00 - 12.30

Crit Club

Cem A, Artist

A special, everyday imaging focused Crit Club workshop

Crit Club is a performance by Cem A. where speakers debate an unrealistic question about art. Challenging the binary of praise and non-engagement in the art sphere, where people are increasingly hesitant to inhabit spaces of disagreement, participants are invited to engage in a contextual performance—a departure from their usual roles as artists or curators, aimed at broadening their perspectives and exercising their ability to think beyond binaries.

As the performance progresses, participants are challenged to navigate uncharted waters through roleplay and quick thinking, grappling with existential inquiries such as: Does their expertise illuminate the issue at hand, or does it falter in the face of adversity? Can they uphold their understanding of art world dynamics in a doomsday scenario? Do they embrace the given scenario, or do they seek to defy the confines imposed by the moderator?

Two teams of three or four volunteer speakers each will engage in a 40-minute debate. The remaining participants will share their perspectives at the end of the debate.

13.30 - 17.30

The excessive scale of contemporary everyday imaging...

Andrew Fisher, Research Fellow in Photography, FAMU, Prague, Czech Republic

Vernacular photography: A “colossal and labyrinthine phototheque in whose depths stalks the prodigious image of our strangeness.”

This presentation will explore the situation of vernacular photography today through analysis of everyday uses of imaging technologies, especially as these bring small-scale individual actions into relation with massively scaled social and technical processes. In order to articulate the asymmetries, problems and possibilities opened up by the excessive scales at which these relationships are articulated, the presentation turns to Jean-Luc Nancy's writings which view photography as a ubiquitous mode of being with others. Nancy offers two things in this context. Firstly, he gives a perspective from which to critically evaluate familiar and continuing debates about the bewildering numbers of images that comprise today's visual milieu and that give shape to the worlds we suppose ourselves to share. Secondly, he offers a way of thinking about the small-scale actions and intimate relationships that combine to structure this massively determined and fast-changing milieu. Drawing on everyday imaging practices, the presentation will outline a critical perspective on the excessive scales of contemporary photography and will suggest a theoretical framework for thinking in non-coercive and open-ended ways about the relationships this milieu entails.

Daniel Rubinstein, Writer, philosopher and psychotherapist in private practice

Raw & Unconfined: From Psychic Fragments to Infinite Photos

Drawing on Wilfred Bion's psychoanalytic concepts of container-contained, projective identification, and beta elements, this talk examines how digital photography practices express unprocessed psychic experience. From compulsive selfie-taking to filter manipulation, our endless production of vernacular images represents both an attempt at psychological containment and its recurring failure. Through examining everyday photography, social media sharing, and AI-powered filters, we explore how contemporary image culture manifests what Bion termed a "beta-screen"—a defence against thinking that paradoxically intensifies our psychic torment.

Computational aspects of everyday imaging

Olga Goriunova, Professor and Director of Research in the Media Arts Department at Royal Holloway, University of London, UK

George Oates, Co-Founder & Executive Director of the Flickr Foundation

Discussion moderated by **Kendal Beynon**, PhD researcher at CSNI, London South Bank University, UK in partnership with The Photographers' Gallery

In an era characterised by an overwhelming volume of images and the saturation of computational visual content, the fundamental question arises: What is the role of vernacular image-making in our visual culture both online and AFK (away from keyboard)? With the rise of internet-driven aesthetics such as "corecore" and the proliferation of AI-generated imagery, we, as users, face a challenge in discerning meaning and purpose through the huge amount of visual content.

This discussion explores how the flattening of culture influences the vernacular image and whether there is now a greater need for vernacular photography—not merely as a tool for documentation, but as a means of preserving personal memory and emotion in moments already extensively recorded by others, while also examining the role of platforms in the shaping of these aesthetics.

Eidolon Centre for Everyday Photography
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