

Call for papers: Maison Française d'Oxford 2019 Photobook Conference :

**The British, American and French Photobook:  
Commitment, Memory, Materiality and the Art Market (1900-2019)**

**A conference to be held at the Maison Française, Oxford  
Thursday 14 to Saturday 16 March 2019**

The Maison Française conference committee invites proposals on the social history of the British, American or French photobook from 1900 to the present. Papers will address: commitment or explicit political engagement; memory, commemoration and the writing of history; materiality (whether real or virtual), and how material form affects circulation, handling, critical responses and the social life of the photobook. We invite contributors to analyse these topics with respect to the growth of the market for the photobook as a commodity and an object of bibliophilic attention. Proposals focusing on contemporary productions are particularly welcome.

Recent illustrated anthologies in the vein of *The Photobook: A History* (Gerry Badger and Martin Parr, 2004, 2006, 2014) have established three things: firstly, the photobook-photographer is an editor and an author, or *auteur* (in the cinematographic sense, but applied to “directing” the production of a book); secondly, the photobook is an autonomous work of art, and a collectible object of connoisseurship; thirdly, the photobook “art world” now exists and can be studied.

This conference will concern itself with the social history of the photobook, whether photographer-driven, writer-driven, editor-driven, or publisher-driven. For the purposes of this conference, the definition of the photobook will be extended to include all photographically illustrated books, regardless of subject matter or the proportion of text to image, or indeed whether or not the images are “illustrative” in the strict sense of the word.

Three major questions arise concerning the photobook as a medium:

- Firstly, what place is there for literary fiction or imaginative picture-making in photobooks committed to documentary truth-telling or historical accuracy? In a word, how do fact and fiction, objectivity and subjectivity, cohere?
- Secondly, to what extent does the self-fashioning of the photographer in the art market interfere with the narrative meaning of a photobook? What is the influence of the art market on the photobook or on the writing of photobook histories? And how has the art market for photobooks changed since the bibliophilic creations of the early twentieth century?
- Thirdly, unlike individual prints that become unmoored without their captions, and which can be appropriated and re-used against themselves, can a photo-text shore itself up against appropriation? Is it a privileged pedagogical medium? A self-sufficient medium? This leads to a related question: how have certain photobooks changed with time? How have famous or reprinted photobooks been differently interpreted by different audiences? What has been the afterlife of politically committed photobooks? How, and in what circumstances, have certain photobooks contributed to writing or re-writing local memory or “collective memory”, at the time of their publication and over time?

To answer these questions, specialists in the history of photography, book studies and visual studies are invited to dialogue with researchers in such disciplines as sociology, anthropology, critical race theory, queer theory, gender studies, post-colonial studies and comparative literature. Papers may be disciplinary or multidisciplinary.

Papers shall be given in English.

Proposals are due by 15 November 2018.

Send 300-word abstracts (as an email attachment in Microsoft Word format, RTF, or PDF) along with a one-page CV to  
paul.edwards@cnrs.fr

Roundtable sessions of 60 to 90 minutes may be proposed. They should be pre-organised, and include 3 to 5 panellists. To propose a roundtable, the discussion moderator will send a single 300-word abstract describing the chosen topic, as well as supplying the full details of each panellist, namely their contact information (email and phone number), affiliation and a one-page CV for each. Please be sure to confirm the participation of all panellists before submitting an abstract.

Roundtable proposals are due by 15 November 2018.

Confirmation of acceptance will be sent by 15 January 2019.

One-page/500-word abstracts must be sent by 15 February 2019.

Conference venue :

Maison Française d'Oxford  
2-10 Norham Road  
Oxford OX2 6SE  
Oxfordshire  
England

Coordinator:

Paul Edwards (MFO, CNRS/LARCA, Université Paris Diderot)

Conference website :

<http://www.mfo.cnrs.fr/research/axes-de-recherches/litterature/call-for-papers-the-british-american-and-french-photobook/>

Bibliography (selection)

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