



## Call for papers – International Symposium

### *The Silver Atlantic*

Photographic circulations in the 19th and 20th centuries

Jeu de Paume Museum, Paris, March 19-20, 2020

A symposium organized by the Theory and History of Modern Arts and Literatures Center (THALIM), the Cultural History of Contemporary Societies Center (CHCSC), the Languages Arts and Music Synergies Center (SLAM) and the Jeu de Paume Museum, in conjunction with the National Research Agency project Transatlantic Cultures.

In 2007, a special issue of *Etudes Photographiques* entitled “Paris - New York” traced some of the countless, crisscrossing exchanges of pictures, ideas and technologies between two historical capitals of photography. These “zigzags” redirected conventional, linear accounts of the way a supposedly French-born technology was gradually taken over, in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, by the United States’ rising economic, ideological and media dominance. This ostensible “cultural transfer” (Espagne 2013) turned out to be rather a continuous dialogue between Europe and North America: “the density of transatlantic exchanges [confirmed] that photography and its institutionalization reflect an Atlantic history” (Brunet et al., 2007, 3).

As is well-known, the story of photography’s beginnings has given rise to competing claims, rooted in diverging national narratives. Photography was imagined, envisioned, even possibly invented before Daguerre by Englishmen (among whom Henry Talbot), a Spaniard from Zaragoza (Ramos Zapetti) and perhaps even by another Frenchman exiled in Brazil (Hercules Florence). What François Brunet labeled “the idea of photography” (Brunet 2000) seems to have emerged almost simultaneously all around the shores of the Atlantic: “the desire to photograph appears as a regular discourse at a particular time and place—in Europe or its colonies during the two or three decades around 1800” (Batchen, 16).

The “Silver Atlantic” conference ambitions precisely to follow the zigzags cutting across the region, before the visual culture of the end of the 20th century was fundamentally transformed and globalized by digital technology and the apparent dematerialization of images. The construction of Atlantic cultures was partly played out in the way this “desire to photograph” crossed the Atlantic. Circulating pictures and publications, travelling professional and amateur practitioners, the international market for equipment and the organization of exhibitions all contributed to substantial commercial and cultural exchanges.

These crossings first reached major Atlantic capitals and harbors. They linked migrants’ homelands to the frontiers of exile (Kroes 2007, 34-53), mission fields and battlefields, tourism hotspots and mysterious horizons. To do so, photographs traveled by ship, cable, plane, and even inside a famous Mexican suitcase (Young 2010). Travels and correspondence, artistic circulations, institutional and cultural exchanges helped maintain kinships, invent friendships, foster political or religious networks throughout the region, nourishing common narratives across the ocean. The image Atlantic materialized both connection and distance, community and separation. It gave shape to empires, fed both propaganda and trade, and even invented a utopian “Family of Man” in the aftermath of the World War II (Stimson 2006, 87).

Papers presented in this conference should therefore focus on the contribution of photographs to the Atlantic visualscape (Schneider 2013, 36), the “image world” evoked by Deborah Poole to describe the visual economy linking the Andes, Africa, Europe and the United States (Poole 1997, 7).

**We invite submissions on topics including, but not limited to:**

- The material circulation of pictures and publications
- Circulations of actors (photographers, gallery owners, agents...), ideas (theories, books, translations...) and practices (forms, genres...)
- Circulation of technology
- Commercial and institutional exchanges (agencies, museums, exhibitions, publishing houses, companies, etc.)

This symposium is part of the international research project “Transatlantic Cultures”. Launched in 2015 by the Cultural History of Contemporary Societies Center (Paris-Saclay), the University Sorbonne-Nouvelle Paris 3 and the University of São Paulo, this project gathers a team of 40 researchers from 19 universities in Europe, Africa and the Americas. It will produce a *Digital Platform for Transatlantic Cultural History* edited in four languages (English, French, Spanish and Portuguese) whose aim is to analyze the cultural dynamics of the Atlantic Area and its central role in the contemporary process of globalization. Additional information: <https://tracs.hypotheses.org/>

## References

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- Poole, Deborah. 1997. *Vision, Race and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Schneider, Jürg. 2013. "Portrait Photography: A Visual Currency in the Atlantic Visualscape." In *Portraiture and Photography in Africa*, edited by John M. Peffer and Elisabeth Lynn Cameron. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
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## Additional information:

20-minute papers will be presented in French or English.

Deadline for sending proposals: 15 June 2019

Email: [silveratlantic2020@gmail.com](mailto:silveratlantic2020@gmail.com)

Proposal format: abstract in English (no more than 1,500 characters), ten references and a biography (500 characters).

Notification of acceptance: 15 September 2019

Papers will be expected by February 1st, 2020

**Organizing committee**

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