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Academic Sessions: Belfast 2007

Photography between Poetry and Politics: The Critical Position of the Photographic Medium in Contemporary Art

Convenors:

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Helen Westgeest, University of Leiden h.f.westgeest@let.leidenuniv.nl

The ambition of this session is to examine a recurrent question in the recent literature on the use of the photographic medium in contemporary art. It concerns the multiformity of the use and ways

the photograph manifests itself in diverse artistic practices today. Central to the debate is the question whether photography has a hybrid or chameleonic character because it can be part of entirely different multimedia/mixed media works of art, such as the combination of photographs and text, photography in painting, slides in video installations, digital photographs in computer art, photographs in installation art, etc. Or does the photo-image nowadays mainly serve as a useful tool to make a renewed kind of 'tableaux', manifesting its 'pictorial autonomy' yet as such often being marked by a rather noncommittal and 'poetic' visual imagery? When photographic practices aim at raising a critical debate on the internal workings of the artistic system itself or on broader social problems, is the photograph then able to distinguish itself from a merely 'political' statement or a pamphlet? A wide variety of papers addresses these issues, either situating them in a larger theoretical perspective or departing from a case study.

Speakers:

Sara Cochran (Los Angeles County Museum of Art)
Party-On: Class Performance in Contemporary British Photography

Liesbeth Decan (K.U. Leuven)
Critical Realism in Belgian Portrait Photography and Painting of the 1980s

T.J. Demos (University College London)
Photography and Bare Life

Simon Faulkner (Manchester Metropolitan University)
David Reeb: Painting, Photography, Occupation

Cliff Lauson (University College London)
Jeff Wall's Cinematographic Photography

Susan Laxton (Princeton University)
What Photographs Don't Know

Anne Marsh (Monash University)
Politics and Poetics: A Case Study on Peter Kennedy

Alexandra Moschovi (University of Sunderland)
Changing Places: The Rebranding of Photography as Contemporary Art

Alexander Streitberger (Université catholique de Louvain)
'The ambiguous multiple-entendre'. The Impact of Photography in Multimedia Works of Marcel Broodthaers and John Baldessari

Mechtild Widrich (MIT)
Can Photographs Make it So? Three Outbreaks of Valie Export's Genital Panic, 1969–2005

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