

Conference Cycle
Panoramic – KBr Fundación MAPFRE

Photography and Chance

Directed by Joan Fontcuberta

PANORÀMIC
FESTIVAL DE CINEMA, FOTOGRAFIA I MÉS



Barcelona Photo Center

Eng

The debate between chance and prediction has permeated the evolution of humanity in general and artistic creation in particular during the contemporary era. Innovating creative techniques such as automatic writing and the exquisite corpse (*cadavre-exquis*), and accepting the readymade art object (*object-trouvé*), the Surrealists became the standard-bearers of chance: the magic of randomness and the unforeseen defused the obsession with control associated with traditional artistic practices, too tied to programs and routines. Since then chance has become one of the engines of avant-garde aesthetics.

In the midst of a culture of prediction it is important to reconsider the history of photography and the current state of the visual arts through the prism of a dialectic between the will to control and the force of chance. We ask ourselves: is there a sort of chance that is intertwined in the most intimate nature of photography, not as a consequence of the ignorance of the operator, but as a fundamental property of the mechanism? A chance that exercises dominance over form and that, breaking the mimetic pact with reality, favors the fickle emergence of results unanticipated by the imagination?

From daguerreotype to neuronal networks applied to the image, this series of lectures given by Héloïse Conésa, Mónica Bello, Joachim Schmid and Clément Chéroux, proposes to examine the onslaught of uncertainty and prediction by looking at aspects of photographic practice, history and criticism, and the relationship between art, science, and technology.

Joan Fontcuberta

Dates
**November 2nd, 3rd,
4th, 5th**

Time
7:00 pm

*Simultaneous
translation into Spanish
will be available when
conferences are held
in another language.*

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**11.02
2021** **Héloïse Conésa**
***The Rolling of the Dice
and the Vengeance of Matter***

In person and online

In the field of contemporary photography many authors have integrated chance into their creative process in order to test the material nature of the medium against its surroundings, particularly nature, prompting an entire array of physical or chemical reactions that shape the final piece. Frequently these “alchemic” photographs are confined to abstraction, represented by a sort of biological chaos, and are accompanied by a reflection of their own fragility. Along these lines, in 1992 Sigmar Polke composed a series of stills “Untitled (Blue, Violet, Green)” with uranium; and since 2015, Meghann Riepenhoff has produced a series of cyanotypes entitled *Littoral Drift* with the help of the wind, the ocean and sand. This alliance between *chance & change*, to use the expression coined by Land Art artist Herman de Vries, becomes a way of questioning the link between causality and materiality in the definition of a photograph; it becomes none other than a symbol of its own fate.

Héloïse Conésa (Lyon, 1983) PhD in Art History, is the Contemporary Photography Conservator at the Bibliothèque National de France (BnF) in Paris. She is responsible for collection acquisitions and exhibitions. She has curated several exhibitions such as *French Landscapes. A Photographic Adventure (1984-2017)*, BnF, 2017; *Josef Koudelka. Ruins*, BnF, 2020; *Black and White. An Aesthetic of Photography*, Grand Palais, 2021. She is currently working on an exhibition that explores the link between photography and materiality to be held in the fall of 2023 at the BnF.

**11.03
2021** **Mónica Bello**
***Poetics of Knowledge,
Art and Science in Search
of Meaning***

In person and online

For a number of decades we have found ourselves in a revolutionary era in which the interpretation of reality is determined by the extent of scientific activity. Theoretical models and experimental work produce an objective reality based on the notion that things are natural structures. Phenomena and events stem out of the dynamics and interactions between these structures, many of which we do not perceive in an objective manner and only become aware of by means of the most advanced technologies housed in research centers. In this conference we will discuss the way in which physics—the science of nature that studies the fundamental structures of matter and the laws of the universe—helps us to narrate our history and, when combined with art, articulates our comprehension of reality.

Mónica Bello (Santiago de Compostela, 1973). An art historian and curator, Bello is currently Head of Arts at CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, in Geneva, a position she has held since 2015. Arts at CERN fosters dialogue between artists and scientists at one of the world's leading laboratories. Bello is the curator of the Icelandic Pavilion for the Venice Biennale 2022 with artist Sigurður Guðjónsson. In 2018 she was guest curator of the prestigious Audemars Piguet Art Commission for Art Basel. Formerly, Bello was Artistic Director of VIDA at Fundación Telefónica (2010-14) and Head of Education at LABoral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial, Gijón (2008-2010).

**11.04
2021** **Joachim Schmid**
Give Chance a Chance

In person and online

A peripatetic rumination on the role of chance, randomness, and serendipity in the making, processing, and viewing of photographic imagery.

(Conference conducted in English with simultaneous translation into Spanish)

Joachim Schmid (Balingen, 1955) is a straight old white man who has been working with found photographs and texts since the early 1980s. He has published numerous artist books. His work has been exhibited internationally and is included in numerous collections. For more detailed information please visit www.lumpenfotografie.de

**11.05
2021** **Clément Chéroux**
Photography & Serendipity

Online

Chance occurs at every stage of the photographic process: in front of the lens, within the technical procedure, behind the camera and even in the person who looks at the photograph. Through several examples belonging to the history of photography from its beginnings to the present day, the lecture will attempt to understand the importance of chance in photography. More than chance, luck, hazards, it is the notion of « serendipity » that will be used here to analyze these examples.

(Conference conducted in English with simultaneous translation into Spanish)

Clément Chéroux (Vélizy-Villacoublay, 1970) is the recently appointed Joel and Anne Ehrenkranz Chief Curator of Photography at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Prior to that he was Curator (2007-12) and Chief Curator (2013-16) of Photography at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. Most recently, he held the position of Senior Curator of Photography (2017-2020) at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Chéroux is a photo-historian and holds a PhD in Art History. He has curated approximately 30 exhibitions. As author or editor, he has published more than 40 books and catalogues about photography and its history.

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