

Conference Cycle

The Domestic Camera. Stories of *Amateur* Photography

Directed by Nuria F. Rius

KBr

Fundación **MAPFRE**

Barcelona Photo Center

Eng

This series aim to explore the diverse contexts and historical applications of *amateur* photography, which encompasses photography that is produced beyond the boundaries of professional and artistic domains, yet can possess economic worth and be exhibited in art and fine art photography venues.

The central idea of this series is that the concept of amateurism was a key factor in the invention of photography and thus played a significant role in the medium's historical development. As part of the democratisation of artistic knowledge in modern times, photography became accessible to various social groups, which contributed to the growth of the medium. Analysing this phenomenon enables a more diverse and nuanced understanding of photographic history, considering factors such as users, genres, networks, and functions. This is achieved through an intersectional approach that expands and challenges the traditional model of "the art history of photography" to paraphrase Christopher Phillips (1982).

This series brings together researchers from diverse academic backgrounds to explore the distinctive traits of *amateur* photography, focusing on its massive scale and relational dimensions. Additionally, it aims to examine its application, functionality, and influence in various social and cultural settings through case studies.

Dates
**The following
March 2024 dates:
5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 19**

Time
7:00 pm

*Simultaneous translation
into Spanish will be
available if the conferences
are delivered in another
language.*

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**05.03
2024** **María Rosón**
***A love story within a story:
personal photography up to
developmentalism (1940-1960)***

In-person and online

As Theodor Reik argued, genuine love stories do not exist, because the story of any love is immersed in another story, and it is precisely that other story that we are interested in discovering. It is the photography of ordinary people that reveals this type of story. Through the collection of Manel Montal and María Luisa Gala, held in the Valencian Museum of Ethnology (L'ETNA), we will delve into intense epistolary relationships where the backs of the images are as important as the fronts: these stories are told through the exchange of photographs dedicated to courtship, through poetry, through family group portraits, and more. There are also tales of migration, distance, material and emotional needs, as well as stories of Francoist developmentalism, all expressed through photography.

María Rosón (Madrid, 1982) is a professor of Contemporary Art History at the Complutense University of Madrid. Interested in the popular, the ugly, the kitschy and the excessive, she is a historian of personal photo albums. Her research connects the visual and material culture of 20th century Spain with insights into intersectional feminism, memory and dissident archives. She has worked at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, where she received her PhD; in the Collections Department of the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, and at the University of Valencia. Her publications include the notable *Género, memoria y cultura visual en el primer franquismo (materiales cotidianos, más allá del arte)* (Ediciones Cátedra, 2016), as well as numerous articles on Spanish photography during the postwar period, Francoism and the Transition.

**06.03
2024** **Beatriz Pichel**
***Amateur photography,
emotions and war experiences***

In-person and online

In 1916 Kodak advertised its Vest Pocket as the "soldier's camera". Despite the diminutive photographs, Kodak claimed that these images would capture memories as sharp as the real thing. This underlined the role that photography could play not only in the construction of memories, but in the experience of war itself. This talk asks precisely how *amateur* photographic practices shaped the experience of the First World War. Focusing on the emotional relationships that soldiers and nurses established with their comrades, the landscape, or the enemy, through actions such as taking pictures, posing for the camera, organizing photographs in albums and even sending photos to the press, this presentation will show the impact that *amateur* photography had on the experience of war in the twentieth century.

Beatriz Pichel (Madrid, 1984) is Associate Professor in Photographic History at De Montfort University, UK, where she is also a member of the Photographic History Research Centre. She is the author of the book *Picturing the Western Front. Photography, practices and experiences in First World War France* (Manchester University Press, 2021) and numerous articles on the history of photography, the history of medicine, and the history of emotions. She is currently developing a project on the ethics of medical photography in the 19th century.

**07.03
2024** **Mónica Alonso**
***Inhabiting the present. Domestic
photography, affection and the poetics
of resistance in the postwar period***

In-person and online

After the years of autocracy, marked by an enormous decline in *amateur* photography, the 1950s saw a resurgence of photography in the domestic sphere in Spain. The snapshots, which gradually returned to family albums, seemed to be the symbolic materialization of people's desire, immersed in a violent and complex post-war reality, to inhabit the present and restore normality. Or, at least, to recreate it. In this context, we propose a detailed journey through the domestic photographs of a defeated community for whom life had become about appearances, their very own images being a sort of mask. This tour through photographs and what is done with them will allow us to map intimate geographies, recognize subtle resistance and reconstruct an economy of affection that multiplies the uses and meanings of photographs, helping those who own them and appear in them, to keep going and make sense of an experience that is often beyond them.

Mónica Alonso Riveiro (Logroño, 1982) is a journalist and Assistant Professor of Art History at Spain's National University of Distance Education (UNED). Her main areas of research are the theory of photography, visual and material culture, and memory studies. Her work analyzes the relationship between images, experiences and memories, with a particular focus on the domestic photographs of the republican community, to which she has dedicated the monograph *Habitar la imagen. Fotografía doméstica y poéticas de la resistencia en la posguerra* (GENDEAC, 2022).

**12.03
2024** **Pedro Vicente**
***Domestic narratives. The family album
and its uses, reuses and recycling in
contemporary artistic practices***

In-person and online

In recent years, the family album has become a source of inspiration, reference and raw material for a number of visual creators, to such an extent that it could be said that it almost constitutes a genre of its own within contemporary art of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. This lecture will address the relevance of different projects by contemporary artists related to family albums, analyzing how their works reveal the transcendence of the album in the construction of our individual and collective identities, as a transition from the private to the public. These rereadings transcend the formal and conceptual limits of the family album itself from a discursive, critical and poetic point of view, subverting its dominant narratives and offering these creators the possibility of constructing new ways of representing themselves and expressing their own version and vision of the world.

Pedro Vicente (Terrassa, 1968). With a PhD in Fine Arts, he is a professor of Photography at the Faculty of Fine Arts and Director of the Masters in Photography, Art and Technique at the Polytechnic University of Valencia. Since 2011 he has directed ViSiONA/HU, Programa de la Imagen de la Diputación de Huesca. He has edited the books *Álbum de familia: (re)presentación, (re)creación e (in)materialidad de las fotografías familiares* (La Oficina de Arte y Ediciones, 2013) and *Álbum de familia y prácticas artísticas* (Diputación Provincial de Huesca, 2018), and has curated numerous exhibitions on the family album as part of the ViSiONA/HU program.

**13.03
2024** **Elizabeth Edwards**
**Amateur Photographers: civic society,
social exchange and common goods
in Britain 1880-1920**

In-person and online

In this talk I argue that during in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, *amateur* photographic societies can be understood as donations of photographic skill within social exchange networks, and actively and productively contributed to the common good of civic society. Drawing on, and extending my work on photographic survey, I argue that *amateur* photographers formed a kind of emotional community clustered around place, practice and cultural capital as they participated in the additive spaces of historical and civic imagination. I shall consider, in particular, the role of *amateur* photography in sites of educational value and public improvement such as libraries, museums and local exhibitions which gave mass access to photographs. I argue that *amateur* photographers operated within multiple, interwoven strands of local consciousness as a vital part of local cultural capital.

(Conference held in English with simultaneous translation into Spanish)

Elizabeth Edwards (Carlisle, 1952) is a visual and historical anthropologist. She is Professor Emerita of Photographic History, De Montfort University, Leicester, and Honorary Professor in the Department of Anthropology University College London and at the University of Durham. She works on the social practices of photography over a wide range of topics including colonialism, historical imagination and museums. Her most recent monographs are *The Camera as Historian: Amateur Photographers and Historical Imagination 1885-1920* (Duke University Press, 2012) and *Photographs and the Practice of History: a short primer* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2022).

**14.03
2024** **Christian Joschke**
**Vernacular, Domestic and Amateur
Photography. Reframing 19th and
20th Century Image Practices**

In-person and online

For more than twenty years, the concept of “Vernacular photography” has framed the photo-market, artists’ practices and exhibition business in photography. Driven by a taste for popular and non-artistic production, the notion of “Vernacular” borrowed from the field of American Studies still lacks a scientific definition. On the one hand, it has opened the boundaries of art history allowing popular visual productions to be considered objects of a cultural analysis; on the other hand, it has lured the broader public and the art market without giving them access to the categories of sociological analysis. The lecture will be aimed at reframing of the notions that have been used to qualify photographic practices at the end to the 19th and beginning of 20th Century.

(Conference held in French with simultaneous translation into Spanish)

Christian Joschke (München, 1975) is Professor of Art History at Beaux-Arts Paris and co-editor of the journal *Transbordeur. Photographie histoire société* published by Macula (Paris). He has published articles about the history of photography in journals such as *La Revue de l'art*, *Les Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, *Études photographiques*, and in his book, *Les Yeux de la Nation. Photographie amateur et société dans l'Allemagne de Guillaume II (1888-1914)* (2013, Les Presses du reel). He is currently working on the publication of a book on the German Worker Photography movement during the interwar period.

**19.03
2024** **Geoffrey Batchen**
**Amateur Photography:
A Love Story**

In-person and online

In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes traces the word ‘*amateur*’ to its root, to its basis in love. The *amateur*, he says, is a lover of something. However, I would argue that *amateur* photographers are motivated, not by love, but by fear: by a fear of loss of memory, of loved ones, of life itself. Taking a snapshot is an act of faith in an afterlife, a gesture made in the face of an otherwise secular age. However, that gesture is not confined to the *amateur* photographer. One can also see it evidenced in certain photographs commissioned by clients from professional photographers, photographs that allow the *amateur* to harness studios to do their bidding and express vernacular sentiments. My paper will survey some of these practices in an effort to better understand photography as a kind of love story.

(Conference held in English with simultaneous translation into Spanish)

Dr Geoffrey Batchen (Melbourne, 1957) is Professor of the History of Art at the University of Oxford. He recently curated two exhibitions for the Bodleian Library: *A New Power: Photography in Britain 1800-1850* and *Bright Sparks: Photography and the Talbot Archive*. His books include *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* (The MIT Press, 1997), *Apparitions: Photography and Dissemination* (Power Publications / Academy of Performing Arts in Prague AMU Press, 2018), *Negative/Positive: A history of photography* (Routledge, 2021), *The Forms of Nameless Things: Experimental photographs by William Henry Fox Talbot* (Bodleian Library Publishing, 2022), and *Inventing Photography: William Henry Fox Talbot in the Bodleian Library* (Bodleian Library Publishing, 2023).

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