

Photography and Visual Cultures in the 21st Century: Italy and the *Iconic Turn*



International Conference, Rome, 4-5 December 2014
Palladium Theatre, Roma Tre University



in collaboration with



CALL FOR PAPERS

Photography and Film are still conceived as two separate entities in most Italian academic studies, sometimes tracing a genealogy between these two media, still considering them as different forms of visual representation due to the heavy burden of the classical humanistic tradition. In the international theoretical and cultural debate, differently, new methods emerge at the beginning of the 21st Century – in a meaningful temporal convergence with the growing hegemony of digital cultures and languages. Leaving aside ontological assumptions, these new perspectives outline instead a wider "iconic turn", proposing it as a necessary synthesis to account for several different artistic, medial and cultural issues, marking their distance from any alphabetical *logos*.

Many theorists, such as Belting, Freedberg, Mitchell, Crary, Boehm, reflect on the multifarious shaping of visual culture not only from a comparative standpoint, but from a simultaneous one. Such an angle is the only one that allows the deep metamorphoses introduced by visual and audio-visual media in the realm of art to clearly come to light – so to fully comprehend blurring borders between "high" and "low" cultures that characterized the 20th Century.

Photography, as it produces a still and static image, condenses events and ideas; it proves therefore to be the true cradle of contemporary visual cultures and a seminal stage in their development, contributing in a substantial way to the dismantling of all fixed and firm identities that permeates characterizes the increasingly secularized modern world. The ability to spread everywhere, through endless reproducibility and the multiple

layers of vision they activate, places the photographic images of objects and phenomena, of spaces and geographies, of people and social bodies at the core of modernity. The immense effects of these mobile simulacra on the construction of subjectivity couldn't possibly be over-emphasized powerfully contributed to widening the range of available sensations and to the articulation of a new sensorial culture (Benjamin, Kracauer, Hansen). Photography establishes a new regime of perception that goes beyond the cognitive and conscious register, and entails a vast array of emotions, sentiments, fantasies, visions; this regime also endows audiences with the possibility to confront with modernity in its most conflicting aspects. Placing itself at the metaphorical crossroad between the society of spectacle and that of surveillance, photography displays at the same time, with its manifold potential, both the oppressive and the liberating qualities of modern society and of its technical and cultural development.

Our Conference's aim is to explore the centrality of photography and its indissoluble link with cinema within the scopic regimes of modernity and of our century. Enhancing the interdisciplinary value of visuality, the Conference intends to overcome the specificity of each medium, finally and fully underlining their protean dimension. The choice to address a wide temporal frame, focusing on both past scenarios and contemporary scapes, stems from the consolidated awareness of the essential interactions between different chronological phases – be it through forms of prefiguration, of endless interlacing of anachronisms (Warburg, Didi-Huberman), of re-working and cross-media remediation (Bolter-Grušin, Jenkins). The photographic image's connection to memory and history makes it not only a fundamental historical source (as it has been proved), but also an index and a trace of the present.

The Conference will focus primarily on Italy and on the state of the studies in our country; of course in a wider perspective, so that international contributions are very welcomed. It aims to empower a most needed reflection on the role of visual cultures in the construction of national identities, both in an individual and a collective perspective.

Proposed papers should focus also – but not exclusively – on the following topics:

- Theoretical reflection about the aesthetic and cultural relations between photography, cinema, and other visual media; also locating the fragmented panorama of exchanges and crossings, beginning from the second half of 19th Century, within the international context.
- Photography Studies in Italy in their relation with visual cultures and in a comparative perspective.
- Use of photography in film and performing arts (i.e. documentation of the research for filming locations, of the work on the set, and of live performances).
- Photographic footage, reportage and their role in the production of news, documentaries, feature films, with a particular attention to cinematographic press, photographic magazines and photo-stories, addressing the linkages among photography, cinematic myths, stardom, and the female image they mould.
- Contribution of photography to the construction of landscape, both rural and urban, and to the affective configuration of lived spaces and emotional geographies.
- Amateur photography as a social practice for the construction of individual, familial and collective identities, and its contemporary evolution in social media – a context in which images are invested with ever-growing importance, as tools for representation and self-representation, for the re-actualization of shared memories, and for collective action.

Keynote Speakers: Mary Ann Doane (University of California, Berkeley), Francesco Casetti (Yale University), Philippe Dubois (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris III), Antonio Somaini (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris III).

Official languages of the Conference: English and Italian.

We will consider every proposal (300-500 words), with 5 keywords and a brief biography of the proponent, sent before September 15th, 2014, by email, to fotografia@uniroma3.it. Selection's results will be announced before October 5th.

For more informations: <http://www.mediastudies.it/spip.php?article376>