

The Walther Collection, The Center for the Study of Social Difference at Columbia University, and The Barnard Center for Research on Women Present an International Symposium on Vernacular Photography



Unidentified compiler, [The Girlfriends' Album], 1934. Courtesy The Walther Collection

Friday, October 19, 2018, from 5:00 to 7:30pm
Saturday, October 20, 2018, from 10:30am to 6:30pm

The Lenfest Center for the Arts
Columbia University
Katharina Otto-Bernstein Screening Room
615 West 129th Street
New York, NY 10027

The Walther Collection, The Center for the Study of Social Difference at Columbia University, and The Barnard Center for Research on Women will present *Imagining Everyday Life: Engagements with Vernacular Photography*, a two-day international symposium on Friday, October 19, 2018 and Saturday, October 20, 2018.

The symposium aims to articulate the multiple definitions of vernacular photography within a newly expanded field of critical investigation—reconsidering the context and meaning of often overlooked photographic practices and tracing their specific social histories. Bringing together

speakers from a wide range of academic disciplines, presentations will consider vernacular photography in diverse stylistic forms, utilitarian applications, and regional variants. With examples ranging from ethnographic records to criminal mugshots to family photo albums, the discussions will offer new ways to think about photography in relation to our political communities, social agency, and daily personal rituals. While such formats may reinforce the regulatory standards of identity and political participation that govern definitions of gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality, they also become crucial sites of social resistance and transformation.

Organized and co-chaired by **Brian Wallis** (The Walther Collection), **Marianne Hirsch** (Columbia University), and **Tina Campt** (Barnard College), the conference will consist of four panels: *Why Vernacular Photography? The Limits & Possibilities of a Field*, which seeks to define, question, and re-value the field itself; *Troubling Portraiture: Photographic Portraits and The Shadow Archive*, exploring the structures and logic of utilitarian portrait photography; *Performance and Transformation: Photographic (Re)visions of Subjectivity*, unpacking photographic representations and the self-imaging of race, gender, and sexuality; and lastly *Space, Materiality, and the Social Worlds of the Photograph*, which examines the physical and tactile nature of vernacular photographs, as well as their relationship to viewing conventions, circulation, and representations of private and public space.

Participants include **Ariella Azoulay** (Brown University), **Geoffrey Batchen** (University of Wellington), **Clément Chéroux** (SFMOMA), **Patricia Hayes** (University of Western Cape), **Nicole Fleetwood** (Rutgers University), **Lily Cho** (York University), **Ali Behdad** (UCLA), **Laura Wexler** (Yale University), **Gil Hochberg** (Columbia University), **Shawn Michelle Smith** (Art Institute of Chicago), **Sophie Hackett** (Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto), **Elsbeth Brown** (University of Toronto), **Leigh Raiford** (UC Berkeley), **Drew Thompson** (Bard College), **Thy Phu** (Western University), **Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett** (NYU), and **Deborah Willis** (NYU).

The symposium coincides with The Walther Collection's multi-exhibition series titled "Imagining Everyday Life," curated by Brian Wallis, which includes the exhibition currently on view at The Walther Collection Project Space in New York, *Scrapbook Love Story: Memory and the Vernacular Photo Album*. The series will culminate in a major exhibition at the collection's Neu-Ulm campus in 2020, accompanied by a significant catalogue co-published with Steidl.

The Walther Collection is an art foundation dedicated to the critical understanding of historical and contemporary photography and related media. Through a program of original research, in-depth collecting, scholarly publications, and extensive exhibitions, The Walther Collection aims to highlight the social uses of photography and to expand the history of the medium. At its three-building campus in Neu-Ulm, Germany, its Project Space in New York City, and with traveling installations worldwide, The Walther Collection presents thematic and monographic exhibitions drawn from its expansive holdings of modern and contemporary photography and media art from Africa, China, Japan, and Europe, nineteenth-century European and African photography, and vernacular lens-based imagery from across the globe. The collection's exhibition program is complemented by public lectures and screenings, international scholarly symposia, and a critically acclaimed series of catalogues and monographs co-published by Steidl.

The Center for the Study of Social Difference (CSSD) is an interdisciplinary research center supporting collaborative projects that address gender, race, sexuality, and other forms of inequality to foster ethical and progressive social change. This conference is a legacy of the Center's multi-year project on "Engendering the Archive."

The Barnard Center for Research on Women (BCRW) brings scholars and activists together through its working groups, public events, publications, and multimedia projects to advance intersectional social justice feminist analyses and to promote social transformation.

Imagining Everyday Life: Engagements with Vernacular Photography has received generous support from The Walther Collection; Center for the Study of Social Difference | Columbia University; Barnard Center for Research on Women | Barnard College; Society of Fellows and The Heyman Center for Humanities | Columbia University; Department of Art History and Archaeology | Columbia University; Institute for Research in African-American Studies | Columbia University; Institute for African Studies | Columbia University; Andrew and Marina Lewin Family Foundation; Documentary Arts, Inc.

Program

Friday, October 19, 2018

- 5:15 PM Welcome and Introductions
Artur Walther Founder, The Walther Collection
- Session 1 – Why Vernacular Photography?
The Limits and Possibilities of a Field
- 5:25 PM Opening remarks by Session Chair
Brian Wallis The Walther Collection
- 5:40PM Presentations
- “These are not Photographs, These are Components of Imperial Violence”
Ariella Azoulay Brown University
- “Whither the Vernacular?”
Geoffrey Batchen Victoria University of Wellington
- “Introducing Werner Kähler”
Clément Chéroux San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
- “Photographs on the Edge of History”
Patricia Hayes University of Western Cape
- 6:45 PM Questions and Discussion

Saturday, October 20, 2018

- 10:30 AM Session 2 – Troubling Portraiture:
Photographic Portraits and The Shadow Archive
- Opening remarks by Session Chair
Tina Campt Barnard College
- 10:45 AM Presentations

“Vernacular Images of Captivity”
Nicole Fleetwood Rutgers University

“Capture and Captivation: Identifying Migrancy and the Making of Non-citizens”
Lily Cho York University

“On Vernacular Portrait Photography in Iran”
Ali Behdad University of California, Los Angeles

“Explosions of the Possible: Reading the Everyday Out of Time”
Laura Wexler Yale University

11:50 AM Questions and Discussion

12:30 PM LUNCH BREAK

2:00 PM Session 3 – Performance and Transformation:
Photographic (Re)visions of Subjectivity

Opening remarks by Session Chair
Gil Hochberg Columbia University

2:15PM Presentations

“Occupational Portraits and Escape Artists”
Shawn Michelle Smith School of the Art Institute of Chicago

“Bobbie in Context”
Sophie Hackett Art Gallery of Ontario

“It’s Raining Men: Physique Photography and Racial Capitalism”
Elspeth Brown University of Toronto

“Exiles, Soldiers and Black Beauty Queens: Making Home Abroad
in Black Photo Albums”
Leigh Raiford University of California, Berkeley

3:20 PM Questions and Discussion

4:00 PM COFFEE & TEA BREAK | The Lantern, 8th floor

4:30 PM Session 4 – Space, Materiality, and the Social Worlds of the Photograph

Opening remarks by Session Chair
Marianne Hirsch Columbia University

4:45 PM Presentations

“Polaroids and the Materiality of Loss”
Drew Thompson Bard College

“Intimate Estrangements and the Shape of Family”
Thy Phu Western University

“The Extraordinary Ordinary: Piecing Lives Together”
Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett New York University

“‘Speaking of Pictures’ – Shaping and Creating Narratives in the
African American Family Album”
Deborah Willis New York University

5:50 PM Questions and Discussion

6:30 PM Closing Remarks
Brian Wallis, Marianne Hirsch, Tina Campt
