

# International symposium

PHOTO

OBJECT

CONCEPT

## New Approaches to Photography in Conceptual Art

Thursday, november 19, 11 am-7pm, Petite Salle, Centre Pompidou.  
Friday, november 20, 11 am-7pm, Petite Salle, Centre Pompidou.  
Free admission, subject to availability. Simultaneous translation  
(English/French, French/English).

The idea of conceptual art as an art of dematerialization has long established the notion that the photograph in this context played an essentially documentary role. The aim of this symposium is to present new approaches to photography within the compass of conceptual art by considering the materiality of these photographic works, paying special attention to the diversity of uses and functions to which photography was put in this context, to the devices and systems employed, and to the modes of presentation and exhibition. The objective as well is to decenter the history of this seminal chapter of contemporary art. As well as looking at the United States, special attention is paid to the French, German, Italian, Canadian, Japanese, Eastern European and Latin American scenes.

The symposium is convened by: Jean-Pierre Criqui (Centre Pompidou), Larisa Dryansky (INHA / Université Paris-Sorbonne), Guillaume Le Gall (Université Paris-Sorbonne)

A partnership between the Centre Pompidou and the University Paris-Sorbonne (UMR 8150, Centre André Chastel).

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Illustration: *La couleur trouvée* (detail), photo by Jean Le Gac, 1975, collection Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou Paris



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CENTRE  
ANDRÉ  
CHASTEL

## Thursday, November 19

11:00am Introduction

11:30am Alexandre Quoi

### ANALYTISCHE FOTO- GRAFIE : UN MÉDIUM EN QUESTION DANS L'ART PHOTOGRAPHIQUE OUEST-ALLEMAND DES ANNÉES 1970

Bernd and Hilla Becher's fundamental contribution to the history of photo-conceptualism should not eclipse the wealth of work done in this vein on the West German art scene of the 1970s. This paper examines the diversity of such practices usually designated under the umbrella term of "analytic photography," a term that emerged in the critical discourse of the time. It focuses on three major approaches: the deconstruction of the conventions of the photographic medium (Kuppel, Rautert, Ritterbusch...), the staging of photographs (Badura, Blume, Ulrichs...), and the recycling of found images (Feldmann, Hacker, Liptow...). Paying special attention to the ways in which these experimentations with photography were circulated, this presentation at the same time highlights the essential role played by German art in the emergence of an international movement that reconfigured the relationship between art and photography.

Alexandre Quoi is assistant professor of Contemporary Art History at the University of Aix-Marseille and visiting lecturer at ENSP Arles. He was assistant curator of the exhibitions *Chefs-d'œuvre?* and *Vues d'en haut* at Centre Pompidou-Metz.

12:15pm Erik Verhagen

### FAIRE APPEL À UN AUTRE : UN ART DE LA PROCURATION

Whether because they questioned the notion of authorship, or because of a certain disdain for the medium

of photography, or quite simply due to their insufficient mastery of photographic techniques, several conceptual artists turned to either professional or occasional photographers in order to physically produce the pictures for their work. This paper looks at three such cases of collaboration, ranging from the more "classic" examples of Mel Bochner and Gretchen Lambert, and Eleanor Antin and Philip Steinmetz, to the quasi inverted relation that occurred between Timm Rautert and Franz Erhard Walther. Both a "professional" photographer and a conceptual artist in his own right, Rautert indeed offers a more ambiguous case for understanding the complex relation between artist and photographer in this context.

Erik Verhagen is assistant professor of Contemporary Art History at the University of Valenciennes. He is also active as an art critic, contributing regularly to *Art Press*. He is the author of a monograph on the photographs of Jan Dibbets (Leuven University Press).

1:00pm Pause

2:30pm Giuliano Sergio

### FRANCO VACCARI. PUBLIC ET AUTEUR OCCULTE

Today, Franco Vaccari is recognized as one of the most noteworthy artists of the last 50 years. His work revolutionized the conceptual approach to the photograph as document and trace of the artist's practice. With his *Esposizioni in tempo reale*, Vaccari further radicalized the position of the avant-gardes in making himself the hidden author of a process in which the public becomes the maker of the image. Rejecting the myth of the artist, his projects constitute systems of participation that reveal the connections between the automatism of photography and the social necessity of the construction of icons. Through his images, books,

and installations, Vaccari developed an artistic project that presciently anticipated the contemporary effects of the widespread diffusion of photography and the photographic image.

Giuliano Sergio is professor of art history at the Urbino School of Art and author of *Ugo Mulas. Vitalità del negativo* (Johan & Levi, 2010) and *Information document œuvre. Parcours de la photographie en Italie dans les années 60 et 70* (Presses universitaires de Paris Ouest, 2015). He has curated several exhibitions including *Luigi Ghirri. Pensare per immagini* (MAXXI, Rome, 2013 and Instituto Moreira Salles, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, 2013-2014).

3:15pm Karolina Ziebinska-  
Lewandowska

### MIKLOS ERDELY – ZBIGNIEW DLUBAK. LES CHAMPS CROISÉS : PHOTOGRAPHIE ET ART DU CONCEPT

By juxtaposing two important figures of the Eastern European neo-avant-gardes – the Hungarian Miklos Erdely and the Pole Zbigniew Dlubak – this paper seeks to demonstrate and examine the consequences of the combination of the photographic apparatus (dispositif) with practices derived from conceptualism. These two figures represent polar opposites. For Erdely, a conceptual artist and a key figure of the Hungarian avant-garde, photography, although he made extensive use of it, remained a "poor" medium. Dlubak, on the other hand – a painter and theorist on the fringes of the conceptual movement – was a "real" photographer. For him photography was the *terrain* of his semantic investigations, central to his reflection on devices and structures of presentation. Comparing and contrasting each artist's approach to the production, presentation and thematics of photography, this paper at the same time intends to highlight key issues relating to the uses of the photographic medium by the avant-gardes of the 1960s and 1970s.

Karolina Ziebinska-Lewandowska holds a doctorate in the history of art. A specialist in photography, from 1999 to 2010, she was a curator at the Zacheta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw. She was co-founder of the Archaeology of Photography Foundation and its president from 2008 to 2014. She is currently Curator in the Photography Department at the Centre Pompidou.

4:00pm Cristina Freire

### SLIDES AS TRANSITIONAL DEVICES

Artists' use of slides constitutes a transitional moment in contemporary art whose historical and critical relevance increases in our digital age with the medium's obsolescence. Particularly in the 1970s, artists used slides both as a critical device and as a source of invention. Indeed, as a medium, slide projection stands between cinema and photography, artistic practice and criticism, and was coopted by artists in the same way as the archive, the museum, and the classroom. Frequently used in educational activities, it was also widely employed by artists and critics to document works, performances, and situations. Combined with soundtracks, slides became an element of artistic installations, introducing a specific language. Focusing on the Brazilian art scene, this paper examines the slide's critical power, its performativity, and its time-space as well as the issue of the viewer's bodily presence in relation to slide projections.

Cristina Freire is professor and curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art of the University of São Paulo (MAC USP). She coordinates the Post-Graduate Program in Aesthetics and Art History at the same university. She is chair of the Research Group "Conceptual Art and Conceptualisms in the Museum" of the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development.



*La couleur trouvée* (detail), photo by Jean Le Gac, 1975,  
collection Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou Paris

4:45pm Yasufumi  
Nakamori

**FOR A NEW WORLD  
TO COME: EXPERIMENTS  
IN JAPANESE ART AND  
PHOTOGRAPHY, 1968-1979**

This talk will trace the development of experimental practices with the camera found in Japanese art in the 1970s. In the wake of the 1960s, when student protests, political radicalism, and avant-garde art initiatives reached their peak, artists (i.e., sculptors and painters) and photographers alike were driven toward a more introspective search for new, conceptual, experimental, and intermedia directions to defy conventions and engage in global artistic trends, such as postminimalism and conceptualism. The talk will derive from the research conducted in preparation for the 2015 exhibition titled *"For a new World to Come: Experiments in Japanese Art and Photography 1968-1979"*, currently on view in New York City, jointly presented at Japan Society Gallery, and Grey Art Gallery of New York University.

Yasufumi Nakamori is curator of photography at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, in Texas, where he focuses on art and photography made after 1945. An expert in the interdisciplinary field of photography, architecture and visual culture of 20th-century Japan.

5:30pm Round-table discussion

**Friday, November 20**

11:00am Introduction

11:30am Larisa Dryansky

**« VOIR COMME ».  
PHOTOGRAPHIE, ÉPISTÉ-  
MOLOGIE ET LANGAGE  
DANS L'ART CONCEPTUEL**

As Stephen Melville rightly notes, the art of the Sixties was characterized by an "extraordinary epistemologism." Indeed, artists of this time not only demonstrated a great appetite for science and philosophy, but envisaged art itself as a form of knowledge. While much attention has been paid to the ways in which artists imitated the "look" of science (e.g. Benjamin Buchloh, Liz Kotz, Eve Meltzer, etc.), particularly in the so-called "documentary" uses of photography, there have been comparatively fewer studies of the manner in which scientific notions and the philosophy of science contributed to changing artists' conceptions of the image and of visual perception more generally. Looking chiefly at the work of Douglas Huebler and Joseph Kosuth, this paper seeks to reveal the role played by epistemological models in the development of a conceptual type of photography. Addressing notions drawn from fields as diverse as quantum physics, cartography, and the philosophy of Wittgenstein, it also attempts to take a new look at the central question of the relationship between image and language in conceptual art.

Larisa Dryansky is professor of contemporary art history at the University of Paris-Sorbonne and since September 2014 on academic leave at the French National Art History Institute (INHA) where she manages research programs in contemporary art. Her recent publications include "Paléofuturisme. Robert Smithson entre préhistoire et posthistoire" in *Les Cahiers du Mnam* (2014).

12:15pm Guillaume Le Gall

**L'IMAGE EXPOSÉE CHEZ  
DOUGLAS HUEBLER**

Douglas Huebler's use of photography underwent several significant changes following the seminal exhibition "January 5-31, 1969". Although the artist used photographs at first as mere documentation, he soon gave the photographic image pride of place in his conceptual project. It is possible to study this evolution by taking a close look at Huebler's exhibitions in succession, focusing on the way the image is progressively enlarged and multiplied. Such amplification is by no means the only change: in Huebler's work, the image is often reworked, reframed, remounted, and reinterpreted. This is particularly true of the several iterations of *Crocodile Tears*, a "film script" whose analysis clarifies the role and status of the image in Huebler's work.

Guillaume Le Gall is assistant professor of contemporary art history at the University of Paris-Sorbonne. He has curated exhibitions of contemporary photography (*Fabricca dell'immagine*, Villa Médicis, 2004; *Learning Photography*, FRAC Haute-Normandie, 2012).

1:00pm Pause

2:30pm Alexander  
Streitberger

**UNE ESTHÉTIQUE  
SITUATIONNELLE.  
LES OBJETS SPÉCIFIQUES  
DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE  
CONCEPTUELLE**

In 1969, American artist Michael Kirby and British artist Victor Burgin independently came up with the notion of "situational aesthetics", taking the object to be defined not by its intrinsic qualities but by its context of inscription. At first glance, this approach seems to perfectly correspond with what Lucy Lippard called the dematerialization of art, i.e.

the tendency to abandon the modernist idea of the autonomous object in favor of a conceptual approach soon to free itself from sculpture. It can be argued, however, that far from denying the object and its materiality, Burgin's "conceptual objects" and Kirby's "embedded sculptures" use photography not to dematerialize the object – far from it – but in reaction to the contemporary debate about sculpture, positing a conceptual object that is fully dependent on a particular site and specific conditions of perception.

Alexander Streitberger is professor of art history at the Catholic University of Louvain and director of the Lieven Gevaert Research Center for Photography. He is joint editor of the Lieven Gevaert Series of books on the history and theory of photography.

3:15pm Vincent Bonin

**IAN WALLACE, IMAGE/  
TEXTE/OBJET (1969-1979)**

This paper considers a series of transitional works by Ian Wallace that mark a break between his structuralist moment (in the late 1960s) and his succeeding semiotic period (1970s) while also reengaging with the materiality of the photographic image that had been devalued by conceptualism. A good case in point is *Magazine Piece* (1969), a programmatic piece that was realized by gluing the pages of a magazine to a wall with adhesive tape. Wallace thus inverted the strategy of interpolating "receivable" works in the advertising space of newspapers and magazines. Situating Wallace's work in its context, this paper also addresses the artist's production in relation to other transitional works of the time produced by his Vancouver peers Roy Arden, Duane Lunden, N.E. Thing Co., and Jeff Wall. Like Wallace, these artists accompanied their reassessment of the history of photography with a critique of the fetishized nature of the ubiquitous news image, provoking a provisional return to images acknowledged in their limits as objects.

Vincent Bonin is a writer and curator who lives and works in Montreal. As a curator, he was notably responsible for the *Protocoles documentaires (1967-1975)* project at the Galerie Leonard & Bina Ellen, Montréal (2007-8). He was joint curator of *Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada (1965-1980)*, which toured Canada and Europe between 2010 and 2014.

4:00pm Robert Slifkin

### A SCANDAL IN BOHEMIA: FORENSICS, PHOTO-CONCEPTUALISM, AND THE ENDS OF LIBERALISM

Within the history of photography the relationship between photography and forensic analysis is longstanding and rather well-known. Beyond the practical uses of the medium in actual detective work numerous photographers and writers have drawn upon forensic motifs and metaphors to describe central aspects of their work and the work of others. Addressing the various ways in which certain artists associated with photo-conceptualism in the late 1960s and the emergent postmodernist photo-based practices in the late 1970s invoked various forensic tropes and signs of criminality, this paper will examine the broader history of photo-conceptualism in terms of what could be called its forensic imagination and its sustained interest in matters of guilt and self-exposure. Ultimately the paper will consider how these artistic strategies might have engaged with growing sense among artists and intellectuals of the period that the counter-cultural ideals of the previous decade were no longer tenable.

Robert Slifkin is an associate professor of fine arts at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University where he teaches courses addressing various aspects of modern and contemporary art and culture. He is the author of *Out of Time: Philip Guston and the Refiguration of Postwar Art* (University of California Press, 2013).

4:45pm Jean Le Gac

### LA PHOTO ERRANTE

"I'll say it again, with text (and photo), I'm in the situation of the Indian army colonel in the film *The Four Feathers* who moves the sugar bowl across the tablecloth to represent the cavalry and sets teaspoons to stand for the lancers in order to explain a memorable battle. I insist on the insufficiency of my means to my ends. That's the new form for me: the scattering of photographs, texts, and paintings on the wall."

Jean Le Gac, *Jean Le Gac et le photographe* (Neuchâtel, 1999)

Jean Le Gac narrated in *Les Cahiers* the research he was undertaking on an amateur painter in 1968. Exhibited at *Documenta 5* in Kassel in 1972, these notebooks marked the beginning of his regular association of photography and text. Since then, whether in *Le Peintre de Tamaris près d'Alès*, *La Sieste du peintre* or *Délassement du peintre*, his work has continued to stage his relationship to art and painting. In his contribution to the symposium, Jean Le Gac will discuss the role and importance of photography in his work.

5:30pm Round-table / discussion