

## Art & Post-Human Photography. How to account for the real.

### Week 17: 22-26.04.2024

**Abstract** For over one hundred years, photography was one of the most important ways to document and account for our external reality, extending a visual regime that started with the development of the central perspective in the 15th century. Its claim to veracity lied in the technical replication of the visual experience of a single human being.

Today, digital image-making has unsettled the relationship between images and human experience is more than ever. On the one hand, ubiquitous pre- and post-processing, widely used AI programs, trained on billions of images, blur the dividing line between recording and generation. On the other hand, more and more images are never to be seen by humans but used for automated processes. But not only machines are “sensing”, increasingly a whole range of “more-than-human” actors are understood as “sensing” the world in different ways, revealing layers and dynamics not directly accessible via the human senses.

But it's not just technologies that have changed. Contemporary realities have become so complex, abstract, and stretched out over time and space, that the individual experience is less and less able to make sense of it. After all, how much can documentary photography reveal about data-centers or climate change?

In response to all these challenges, artists and researchers are developing a new visual language that is able to account for the new contours of the real in the 21st century. We are, among others, focusing on works by Trevor Paglen, Nora Al-Badri, Marc Lombardi, and Forensic Architecture and exploring the notion of “investigative aesthetics” and “operational images”.

### Course requirements:

Attendance (80%)

Participation in reading, discussions, and group presentations

Submission of a very short paper, personal interests in relation to the theme of the module

Pad for course notes:

[https://pad.vmk.zhdk.ch/posthuman\\_real](https://pad.vmk.zhdk.ch/posthuman_real)

## Monday

### Human Photography

“pre-human” [Paradiesgärtlein \(Garden of Paradise\)](#) Upper Rhenish Master, ca 1410

[Invention of the Central Perspective](#) (1420)

[Valley of the Shadow of Death](#) Roger Fenton, 1855, [publicdomainreview.org](http://publicdomainreview.org)

Walker Evans (1903–1975), [https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/evan/hd\\_evan.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/evan/hd_evan.htm)

“If your photographs aren't good enough, you're not close enough.” Robert Capa (1913 – 1954)  
[Legacy](#) BBC Culture

Robert Frank (1924-2019): Americans, 1959,  
<https://www.lensculture.com/articles/robert-frank-the-americans>

Nan Goldin (1953- ), <http://www.artnet.com/artists/nan-goldin>

## Post - Human Photography

Michael Aschauer

- River Studies <https://m.ash.to/en/Projects/riverstudies>
- Rivers as lines <https://m.ash.to/en/Projects/WhatIfYouWouldPullRiversToAStraightLine>
- 7C-Days <https://m.ash.to/en/Projects/7cdays>

Abu Ishaq al-Istakhri, 10th Century  
<http://www.myoldmaps.com/early-medieval-monographs/211-al-istakhri-world-map/211-istakhri.pdf>

Harry Beck. London Subway Map, 1933  
<https://www.theverge.com/2013/3/29/4160028/harry-beck-designer-of-iconic-london-underground-map>

Google Maps, London Subway System 2021  
<https://www.google.com/maps/@51.5075274,-0.0849736,11.26z/data=!5m1!1e2?hl=de>

David Claerbout. Olympia (The real-time disintegration into ruins of the Berlin Olympic Stadium over the course of a thousand years). since 2016  
<https://davidclaerbout.com/Olympia-The-real-time-disintegration-into-ruins-of-the-Berlin-Olympic>

[Talk at HBK, Leipzig](#), 2019

## Reading:

Rubinstein, Daniel. 2018. “Posthuman Photography.” In *The Evolution of the Image: Political Action and the Digital Self*, edited by Marco Bohr and Basia Sliwinska, 100–112. Routledge.  
<https://ualresearchonline.arts.ac.uk/id/eprint/13420/1/DR%20-%20posthuman%20photography.pdf>

- Kenta Kobayashi. [REM](#) (2016)
- [\(In\)visible and \(In\)audible Temporalities in the Work of Daisuke Yokota](#). exposure magazine. Sep 12, 2018

Foster, Hal. 2017. “Real Fictions. Alternatives to Alternative Facts.” *Artforum International*,  
<https://www.artforum.com/print/201704/real-fictions-alternatives-to-alternative-facts-67192>.

Wolfe, Cary. "Posthumanism." In Posthuman Glossary, edited by Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavajova, 356-358. Theory. London Oxford New York New Delhi Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018.

## Tuesday

### Realism(s)

Realism, 19th Century Painting, Gustave Courbet (1819-1877)

[https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/rlsm/hd\\_rlsm.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/rlsm/hd_rlsm.htm)

Tsiga Vertov: Kino-Pravda (1920s). [Man with the Movie Camera](#), 1929 64 min (Soundtrack: Cinematic Orchestra, 2000)

Cinema Verité / Direct Cinema

- Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin. [Chronicle of a Summer](#), 1961 90 Min

Photo Realism: <https://www.museum-franzgertsch.ch/de/franz-gertsch> Franz Gertsch (\*1930)

### Evidentiary Realism

Evidentiary Realism. GROUP SHOW. FEBRUARY 28 - MARCH 31, 2017

<https://nometagallery.com/exhibitions/evidentiary-realism/>

Exhibition Catalogue, [https://nometagallery.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/ER\\_Catalog.pdf](https://nometagallery.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/ER_Catalog.pdf)

### Read

Introduction by Paolo Cirio

- The Other Nefertiti, by Nora Al-Badri and Jan Nikolai Nelles
- Seamless Transitions, by James Bridle
- Reconnaissance, by Ingrid Burrington
- 2 Works, by Mark Lombardi.

## Wednesday

### Operational Images: Seeing Machines

#### Read:

Trevor Paglen: [Is Photography over?](#) Four-Part Series, 01.03. – 15.04.2014

#### Lecture:

Kate Crawford, Trevor Paglen. Datafication of Science, 2019, 32 min

<https://www.hkw.de/de/app/mediathek/video/69622>

\* Kate Crawford and Trevor Paglen, [Excavating AI. The Politics of Images in Machine Learning Training Sets](#)

- [Fondazione Prada: Training Humans](#), Fondazione Prada, Venice, 12 Sep 2019 – 24 Feb 2020 [Review](#), we-make-money-not-art.com, Dec. 16.2019
- Lyons, Michael J. 2020. "Excavating 'Excavating AI': The Elephant in the Gallery." ArXiv:2009.01215 [Cs], September. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4037538>.
- Lyons, Michael J. 2021. "'Excavating AI' Re-Excavated: Debunking a Fallacious Account of the JAFFE Dataset." ArXiv:2107.13998 [Cs], July. <http://arxiv.org/abs/2107.13998>.
- Paglen, Trevor. "Invisible Images (Your Pictures Are Looking at You)." The New Inquiry (blog), December 8, 2016

## Thursday

### Operational Images and Platform Seeing

Harun Farocki: [Eye/Machine III](#), 2003

Mischka Henner, [Feedlots](#), 2013

Parikka, Jussi. Operational Images: From the Visual to the Invisual. Minneapolis [Minnesota]: University of Minnesota Press, 2023. (read: Platform Operations, p. 66-73)

### Platform Realism

Guest: Roland Mayer

Eryk Salvaggio: [Flowers Blooming Backward Into Noise](#) (2023), 19:20

### 18:00-20:00Talk, Film screening and Discussion

[Acapulco](#), Bruno Moreschi

Working in Progress or First Cut

Kino Toni

## Friday

Jennifer Gnabris, Helen Pritschard. Sensing Practices. in Braidotti, Rosi, and Maria Hlavajova, eds. 2018. Posthuman Glossary. Theory. London Oxford New York New Delhi Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic

## PDF

Fuller, Matthew, and Eyal Weizman. *Investigative Aesthetics: Conflicts and Commons in the Politics of Truth*. Brooklyn: Verso Books, 2021. (Read: *Aesthetics beyond Perception*, pp. 3-41)

<https://forensic-architecture.org>

**Works:**

- The Killing of Nadeem Nawara and Mohammed Abu Daher,  
<https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/the-killing-of-nadeem-nawara-and-mohammed-abu-daher>
- Triple Chaser: <https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/triple-chaser>
- Intentional Fires in Papua  
<https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/intentional-fires-in-papua>
- The Murder of Halit Yozgat;  
<https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/the-murder-of-halit-yozgat>,  
<https://www.nsu-tribunal.de/en/>
  - Lawrence Abu Hamdan: 77sqm\_9:26min at Documenta 14  
[https://forensic-architecture.org/programme/exhibitions/77sqm\\_926min-documenta-14](https://forensic-architecture.org/programme/exhibitions/77sqm_926min-documenta-14)
  - <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/documenta-14-kassel-forensic-nsu-trial-984701>

**Additional references:**

- Weizman, Eyal: [Forensic Architecture – Lecture](#), Haus der Kunst, Munich, Nov. 2018 (start at 11:40)
- [Investigative Aesthetics. Pierre D'Alancaise in Conversation with Mattheu Fuller and Eyal Weizmann](#), Oct, 10.2021, Audio, 74 Min.
- Weizman, Eyal. 2017. *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability*. Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books. Introduction p. 13-33
- Weizman, Eyal. 2019. "Open Verification." *E-Flux Architecture* (June 2019), 2019.  
<https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/becoming-digital/248062/open-verification>

**Writing of papers**

1-2 pages, personal interest, relating to themes discussed during the week.

Presentation of ideas for paper

**Afternoon**

individual writing

personal mentorat (if interest)

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Parikka, J. (2023) *Operational images: from the visual to the invisual*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

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