

History of Contemporary Photography

DOM-E3046

4 ECTS

Autumn 2020 (periods I-II)

17.9.2020 - 3.12.2020

Teacher: Harri Laakso (& guests)

harri.laakso@aalto.fi

Course description

The course explores the historical roots of contemporary photography; the key concepts and debates, and their historical development. The course includes both, the examination of relevant practices and genres (e.g. nudes, conceptual art, landscape, post-photography), as well as the development of certain themes across photography's history (e.g. questions of photographic truth, narration, realism, ontology and technology). The whole range of photography's history is addressed but the focus is in art photography from the latter part of the 20th Century onwards, up until the present day. Connections are made between theory and practice, and between one's own photographic practice and the contemporary historical moment.

The lectures are in English, but the written assignments can also be completed in Finnish.

Requirements and course assignments

Attendance 80% and participation, reading assigned texts, completing 2 essays/assignments:

1) Select one *photograph* (or *photographic work*) which *in your view* is particularly significant (or problematic) for the history of contemporary photography *and* has relevance to *your own practice*. Prepare a short essay on the subject (à la Barthes's *Mythologies*) 2-3 pages (700-1000 words) text + images. (Font size e.g. Times New Roman 12, spacing 1,5 – so they are easier for me to comment.) Mark references and citations in a consistent way.

Deadline: 15.11. Send to harri.laakso@aalto.fi as pdf-files.

2) Write a short essay (also 2-3 pages) concerning a specific *theme/idea/observation* in contemporary photography history. This essay should support your further studies, so find a tempting subject. If you want you can experiment with an alternative way of writing/doing photography history. (Can be a work combining images and words in a new way, a short video etc.)

Deadline: 30.11. Send to harri.laakso@aalto.fi as pdf-files (or link to video etc.)

Course grading scale: 1-5

Schedule

(Thursdays at 9.15-12 on Zoom, unless otherwise indicated. Changes are possible!).

17.9 Harri: *What is History, What is Contemporary, What is Photography?* (Course introduction)

24.9 Johanna Frigård: *Nudes and Naked Bodies in the History of Photography*

1.10 Harri: *On Photographic Truths and Fictions*

8.10 Ari Saarto: *Photography and Conceptual Art*

15.10 Ari Saarto: *Contemplating Landscape and Sites: Memory and Topography*

29.10 Harri: *On Photographic Matters and Stories*

5.11 Laura Nissinen: *Searching for Abstraction*

12.11 Maija Tammi: *History of photographs representing sickness*
Harri: *On Matters/Stories and Visions/Rights* (cont.)

* * * 15.11: Deadline for assignment 1

19.11 Sheung Yiu: *From Pixel to What?*

26.11 No class (lecture postponed).

* * * 30.11: Deadline for assignment 2

3.12 Harri: Course ending session / Final presentations

10.12 9.15-10 Final presentations continue

10.15-12 Anna-Kaisa Rastenberger: *Post-photography – Quote: You Must Not Call It Photography If This Expression Hurts You*

12-12.45 Final presentations continue

* NB: You also have the (recommended) possibility for voluntary individual meeting with Harri during the course (30 mins by skype or Zoom). It is a possibility to discuss the assignments or other photography theory related issues. I will notify about possible times later in autumn. For more urgent concerns please set the meeting time by email.