

## Photography, Space & Violence: a Workshop

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Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December, 10:00-17:00

Birkbeck Cinema, 43 Gordon Square, Bloomsbury, London WC1H 0PD



John Murray, *Suttee Ghat, Cawnpore*, collodion print, 1858

**A collaboration between Birkbeck Research Centres: the Centre for History and Theory of Photography; the Centre for Architecture, Space & Society and the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities.**

This workshop is focused on photography as a tool for representing places where routine or traumatic violence unfolded. Primarily aimed at post-graduate students, it may be of interest to others. Four programmed talks will be mixed with shorter student presentations from research in progress.

*Registration is not required for this event; seats will be allocated on a first come, first served basis*

## Session One: 10:00-13:00

### **Claire Zimmerman: Anticipating images: under construction in Buffalo, 1943-1906**

Black and white construction photography of industrial architecture in Buffalo provides an untapped archive of historical information about one of the earliest centres of mechanised industry in the United States. Copious site photography provided a new supervisory tool for architects in the first few decades of the twentieth century, showing scientific management as it entered architectural production, and documenting the routine “violence” of Fordist labour in advance of its unfolding.

*Claire Zimmerman is associate professor of architecture and history of art at the University of Michigan. She has published widely on architecture and curated several exhibitions. This term Claire is Birkbeck Institute of the Humanities visiting fellow.*

### **Alberto Toscano: The Quantities of the Past: Photography in the Aftermath of Capital**

Reflecting on three recent books of American landscape photography – Richard Misrach and Kate Orff’s *Petrochemical America*; Mitch Epstein’s *American Power*; and David Maisal’s *Black Maps: American Landscape and the Apocalyptic Sublime* – this presentation considers environmental devastation in the light of Frederic Jameson’s arguments about ‘dead labour’ in his 2011 book *Representing Capital*.

*Alberto Toscano is Reader in Critical Theory & Co-Director of the Centre for Philosophy and Critical Theory at Goldsmiths. Since 2004 he has been a member of the editorial board for the journal *Historical Materialism: Research in Critical Marxist Theory* and is series editor of *The Italian List* for Seagull Books. A translator of Negri, Badiou and others, Toscano has published widely on critical theory, politics and culture.*

### **Student presentations**

## Session Two: 14:00-17:00

### **Sean Willcock: Photography and the Spaces of Insurgency in British India**

Photographs of atrocity sites were a staple of colonial photography in British India. The aesthetic conventions of the genre shaped the physical and affective engagements of both coloniser and colonised with the spaces of violence. This talk considers how such photography addressed the fraught questions of guilt and retribution that were raised by atrocity sites and their associated politics of mourning.

*Sean Willcock is Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in Art History at Birkbeck and writes on photography in *Colonial India*.*

### **Steve Edwards: Poignant Spaces in contemporary photography**

Many contemporary photographers have produced projects that depict the empty sites of former violence, notably the abandoned headquarters of the Stasi in Berlin. Beginning from the films of Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, this talk considers photographs as or at ‘the scene of a crime’.

*Steve Edwards is Professor of History and Theory of Photography at Birkbeck and Co-Director of the Research Centre for History and Theory of Photography. He has published widely on photography and other things and is an editor of *Oxford Art Journal* and for the *Historical Materialism Book Series*.*

### **Student presentations**