

ISCHE Standing Working Group

Material Hermeneutics and Remediation as Challenges in Visual Studies in Histories of Education

ANNUAL REPORT 2019

The Standing Working Group “Material Hermeneutics and Remediation as Challenges in Visual Studies in Histories of Education” was created by the General Assembly during the ISCHE 41 meeting held in Berlin in August 2018. The convenors are Tim Allender (University of Sydney), Inés Dussel (Mexico, Cinvestav), Ian Grosvenor (University of Birmingham) and Karin Priem (University of Luxembourg).

1. General Purpose of the SWG

The Standing Working Group aims to initiate and invite debates and scholarly exchanges on images and films as complex material and social objects. This objective will be achieved by looking at images as *objects to think with*, by problematizing them as signs or traces of complex entanglements with both the past and the present. These interactions invite us to take more rigorous and complex approaches to studying them.

The convenors conceive the SWG as a space that will open up and discuss further avenues for visual inquiry, enhance interest in images within ISCHE, and raise awareness for what images allow us to think about the plural and complex worlds of educational practices.

2. Activities

The SWG was launched at ISCHE 42 in Porto 2019. The SWG used one two-hour session which was made up of a paper presentation and a workshop. The paper, given by Eduardo Galak (IdIHCS-CONICET/Universidad Nacional de La Plata) and María Silvia Serra (Universidad Nacional de Rosario), focused on the activities of the *Cine Escuela Argentino*. Film extracts generated a wide-ranging discussion around film, education and propaganda. The workshop was organised by Maria del Mar Pozo Andres (University of Alcala), Sjaak Braster (Erasmus University Rotterdam), Inés Dussel (DIE-CINVESTAV), Ian Grosvenor (University of Birmingham), and Karin Priem (University of Luxembourg). Visual evidence was used to explore two related areas of concern for historians of education. First, it considered how the context of seeing changes the nature of meaning as an image is moved from space to space and the implications this had for the ways in which history is communicated through and leaves its mark in images. Secondly, it considered the related issue of ‘believability’ or rather, as Fred Ritchin would term it, the ‘crisis of believability’. Here the focus was on the implications for historical practice of how new imaging technologies have shifted the relationship between the real and the artificial and consequently how the believability of visual evidence has become increasingly compromised as a source of ‘truth.’ The images selected for discussion were connected by a common theme ‘children and food’ and were drawn from Spain, Italy and England. The session was well attended with over 40 delegates.

Outside of the conference, the SWG convenors have focussed their energy on initiating and developing the De Gruyter book series *Appearances: Studies in Visual Research*. A first volume on “They Did Not Stop at Eboli: UNESCO and the Campaign against Illiteracy in a Reportage by David ‘Chim’ Seymour and Texts by Carlo Levi” (ed. by Giovanna Hendel, Carole Naggar & Karin Priem) appeared in December 2019. This first volume is bi-lingual (English and French), features close-up prints of Seymour’s photographs, facsimiles of archival materials and four chapters by Giovanna Hendel, Juri Meda, Carole Naggar and Karin Priem. The second volume of the book series will appear in 2020. It is entitled “The Visual in Educational History: Transnational Reflections of the Practice of History in the Digital Age” (ed. by Tim Allender, Inés Dussel, Ian Grosvenor & Karin Priem) and will showcase results of a Pre-Conference Workshop at ISCHE Buenos Aires. Finally, the third volume entitled “Media Matter: Images as Public Agents and Means of Shaping Identities” (ed. by Francisca Comas Rubí, Karin Priem & Sara González Gómez) is in preparation and emerged from an international workshop at the University of the Balearic Islands which took place in spring 2019. All volumes testify to long-standing collaborations among an international group of historians of education who continue to discuss a broad range of themes and methodological issues around images, photography and film.