

ISCHE Standing Working Group 'Material Hermeneutics and Remediation as Challenges in Visual Studies in Histories of Education'

ANNUAL REPORT 2021/2022

1. 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).

2. 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 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.

3. Activities

"Education and the Imperial Gaze" was the focus of the Standing Working Group in 2022 and we sent out a call for papers which encouraged submissions for ISCHE 43 that addressed a range of related questions: What values and attitudes did imperial photography project when the camera lens was pointed at education and schooling? To what extent are the histories of colonial education an invention of the imperial gaze? How were education-related values and attitudes visually projected and were these projections consistent and persistent across time? Did the imperial gaze extend to post- or non-colonised contexts? Was the imperial gaze challenged when subject peoples used the camera for their own purposes? Was the camera ever a positive force in education and schooling in colonised societies? How visually were/are the stories of colonial education presented in museum displays, archives, and other formats? The call resulted in an extended workshop and three papers at the Milan conference.

The first paper offered an "experiment" whereby academics from the University of Vic explored the process of engaging with the Imperial gaze and the associated pedagogical experience. Using film and methodology associated with the Situationists they worked with students to explore and document the deconstruction of their own imperial gaze - a gaze that represented a dominant white middle class reading of the past - and issues around received knowledge and ways of seeing. The group presented their findings and discussed strategies for rethinking ways of seeing and researching educational history. The second paper, using a case study of the Birmingham based educator and traveller Helen Caddick (1845-1927), focused on "The Female Imperial Gaze" and the close reciprocal relationship between metropole and empire, and how imperial discourses, textual and visual, shaped the formation of both feminine and masculine identities in Britain and created 'imaginative geographies' of empire for the home audience. Caddick's detailed travel journals document the use of words and images to represent her encounters in imperial 'contact zones' and point to the significance of empire in the formation of her identity as an educator and feminist. The third paper, "Between Conservatism and Modernization in Teacher Training for Children's Physical Education, 1976-1983" used two series of photographs to analyse educational technologies used as a didactic resource in the teacher training of children's Physical Education in 1970s and 1980s in Argentina during the period of the military dictatorship. The

photographic archives, made up of a series imported from Germany and another generated by Argentine teachers, include images that are characterized by addressing pedagogical issues that are associated with physical culture, childhood, and teaching methods. The paper, in addition to documenting what can be seen in the images, reconstruct the conditions of production, conservation, and the meanings they have for the institutions that reserved and preserved them. The authors conclude that photographs in the educational field support both a didactic and a cultural argument.

Finally, the workshop “‘A Most Valuable Aid to Education,’ Photography and The Imperial Imaginary” organised by the SWG convenors explored the ‘relational encounter’ between the spectator, the photographer, and the subject and the production and circulation of imperial photographs. At the centre of workshop was the archive of the English photographer, collector, traveller, and politician Sir Benjamin Stone. Stone looked ‘upon photography as being a most valuable aid to education because pictorial illustration is by far the easiest mode and pleasant manner of obtaining instruction.’ The workshop posed a series of questions: What meanings were projected by Stone’s photographs and collections relating to Empire? How did they shape the popular imaginary of Empire and instruct and educate? Is it possible in our postcolonial times to recontextualize his images so that they are not permanently embedded within the imperial framework that produced them? Is it possible for us as historians to overcome the semantic force of archive descriptions and practice when we encounter the colonial photographic gaze and recognise that our political status makes us complicit as spectators? Is it possible to ‘liberate’ our discipline and museology from ‘canonized knowledge, ways of knowing, and praxis of living.’ In exploring these questions, the workshop focused on Stone’s photographs of Empire’s children. The workshop was well attended and the discussion, as with the papers presented, generated a range of issues which directly connected with the mission of the SWG. Collectively, the papers and the workshop, raised issues which will shape the activities of the SWG in Budapest.

4. Book Series *Appearances: Studies in Visual Research* Outside of the conference, the SWG convenors have focused their energy on further developing the De Gruyter book series *Appearances: Studies in Visual Research*. The fourth volume in the series, David ‘Chim’ Seymour. *Searching for the Light 1911-1956* authored by historian Carole Naggar was published in 2022. Following the success of the SWG programme in Milan the editors are currently in the process of developing a new edited volume *The Imperial Gaze: Practices, Representations, and Identities in the Photographic Archive* and a call for submissions has been widely advertised.