

PH: THE PHOTOGRAPHY RESEARCH NETWORK

# BRIDGING THE DISTANCE

23 JUNE–3 JULY 2021



Andreia Alves de Oliveira  
Estéfani Bouza  
Liz J Drew  
Paula Gortázar  
Alexandra Hughes  
Sukey Parnell Johnson  
Uschi Klein  
Caroline Molloy  
Annalisa Sonzogni  
Lauren Winsor

EXHIBITION CURATOR:  
Gil Pasternak

FOUR CORNERS  
121 ROMAN RD, LONDON  
BETHNAL GREEN | E2 0QN

# BRIDGING THE DISTANCE

## Introduction by Gil Pasternak

*Bridging the Distance* is a group exhibition by international photography, moving-image and lens-related artists, designed to re-evaluate photography's ability to draw us close to the feelings, concerns and lived experiences of those who exist beyond our own immediate physical, political and cultural spaces.

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Gil Pasternak is Associate Professor of Social and Political Photographic Cultures in the Photographic History Research Centre (PHRC) at De Montfort University Leicester and co-convenor of Ph: The Photography Research Network. His research investigates intersections of photography and sociopolitical realities, with focus on photographic digital heritage. Alongside numerous articles and book chapters, Pasternak's publications include *The Handbook of Photography Studies* (Routledge 2020) and *Visioning Israel-Palestine* (Bloomsbury 2020) and he has also worked with communities in zones of cultural conflict, which resulted in co-created outputs such as *Recovering Connections* (photobook 2020; digital exhibition 2021) and *Voices from Our Photo Albums* (digital public display in the village of Akrotiri, Cyprus 2019).

The works in the exhibition consider people, groups and places of various national and social backgrounds, all of which have seen major transformations of local and even historic significance in the recent past. Whether sending us from England to former Czechoslovakia, Russia, Spain, or back to England again, their varied communicative approaches invite us to ask how do we – how must we – understand the connection between photography and people's ways of life in today's post-factual world.

Relentlessly compelling us to take a reality check, the artists often use the camera together with other media, such as voice, sound, text, writing, clay and found ephemera. These actions collapse traditional divisions of theory and practice, speculation and perceived knowledge, imagination and experience. The works thereby encourage us to engage with the question of photography's participation in human affairs – intellectually, empirically and emotionally.

Some of the exhibits prompt renewed consideration of photographic images; others revolve around the implications of photography's material manifestations. Fantasy, social perception, seclusion, surveillance and the everyday are themes that run throughout *Bridging the Distance*, enabling us to revisit our understandings of photography's relationship to vision, visibility and visualisation in different yet familiar contexts.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated to all of us how much we are dependent on one another for our mutual protection and safety. Considering the global rise of various forms of physical, political and cultural exclusion that characterise life in the present day nevertheless, *Bridging the Distance* implores us to contemplate how photography may be used to neutralise dogmatic cynicism and establish non-discriminatory connections between people across ideological and actual boundaries alike.

# ANDREIA ALVES DE OLIVEIRA

## *River Boats & Inner Thoughts*

“[The] boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place (...) the heterotopia par excellence” *Michel Foucault*

*River Boats & Inner Thoughts* is a “calendary”, recording both the traffic on the Thames and subjective, psychological states. Published daily on Facebook during a year, it is a work about surveillance (of exterior life and of the self), about the river Thames and its current role, and the psychoanalytic subject/object division. Its scripto-visual form expands on traditional documentary strategies, while it proposes a comment on the use of social media.

In Alves de Oliveira’s words: “For one year, I photographed the boats passing outside my window on the river Thames. Once central to English life, the ‘most historical (and certainly the most eventful) river in the world’ (Peter Ackroyd), crucial to the construction of Britain as Empire, the Thames is now a postindustrial river, carrying ‘pleasure boats’ and speeding police patrols. One day as I was looking out, I caught my reflection in a small mirror that was placed on the window frame. There was I, looking at me observing the boats. How banal and how disturbing. Suddenly, outside and inside, window and mirror, subject and object, were conflated and became one ...”.

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Andreia Alves de Oliveira (b. 1979 in Portugal) is a photographer and researcher in photography and former lawyer. She holds a PhD and an MA in Photographic Studies from the University of Westminster in London and studied at the ICP in New York and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon. She was visiting lecturer at the University of Birmingham, is co-editor of the magazine *Membrana*, member of the research group RHOME at the University of Lisbon and co-convenor of Ph: The Photography Research Network. Recent exhibitions and publications include *Civilization: The Way We Live Now* (Thames & Hudson, 2018). Alves de Oliveira lives and works in Greece.

[www.andreiaoliveira.net](http://www.andreiaoliveira.net)



Apr 1 Sat 14:00

affection



May 26 Fri 15:56

control

Andreia Alves de Oliveira, from the series *River Boats & Inner Thoughts*, 2017

# ESTÉFANI BOUZA

Estéfani Bouza exhibits her ongoing work  $\infty$ , in which she gathers images from different sources to deal with the loss of her birthplace, Saá. This small village in northern Spain was expropriated in 1993 and disappeared as such due to an opencast coal mine expansion.

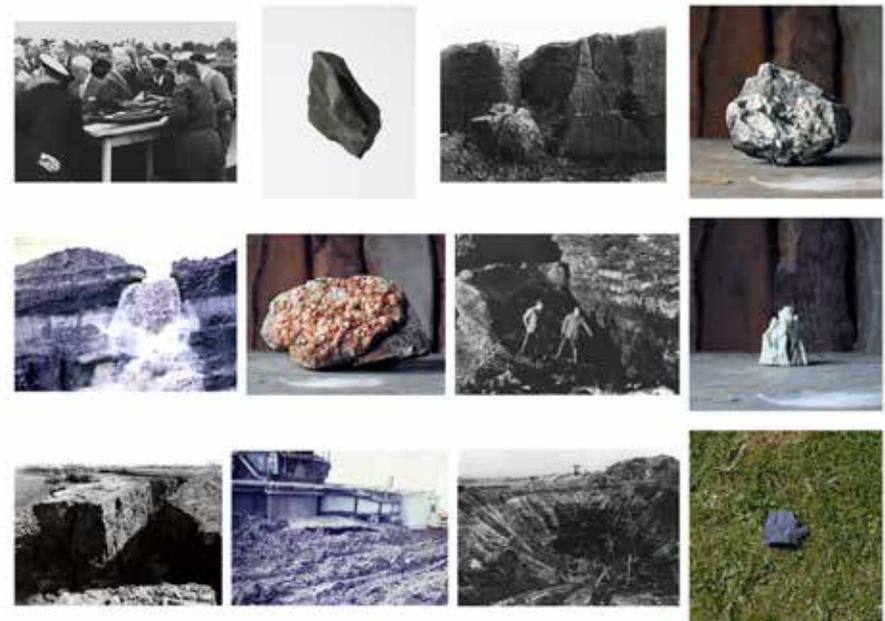
Bouza has collected the material shown in the work from family albums, documentation from the local village archive, corporate images produced by ENDESA – the national electricity company in charge of the mine – and by its workers. But  $\infty$  is not only composed of collected images, it also contains photographs that Bouza made. With this array of material, she has created four clusters of images to construct a “visual atlas”, using the metaphor of the mine with its layers to juxtapose different times, places and spaces. In doing so, Bouza simultaneously presents objects preserved from that place and covers the history of the mine, including the sociological changes it produced and the drastic modifications in the landscape that can be seen throughout the years.

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Estéfani Bouza is a visual artist, researcher and lecturer whose work focuses on ideas of archiving and collecting in photographic practice. She holds a PhD and an MA in photographic studies from the University of Westminster. Her work has been exhibited widely in the UK, Spain, Portugal and South America, including Ambika P3 (London), the Sheffield Institute of Arts Gallery, Círculo de Bellas Artes (Madrid) and Galeria Mascate (Porto Alegre) among others.



Estéfani Bouza, Panel 4 from  $\infty$ , 2017–present



Estéfani Bouza, Panel 5 from  $\infty$ , 2017–present

# PAULA GORTÁZAR

## *Followers, 2020*

During the communist period in Czechoslovakia, the secret police followed indiscriminately thousands of citizens. Through a constant surveillance activity, they captured everyday moments and encounters that could potentially form a case for anti-revolutionary behaviour.

The photographs were often captioned with detailed information on the place where they were taken, the date and time of day and the people with whom the suspect had been seen. Each case was kept in an individual profile file, containing personal information about the suspect and their extended network, including relatives, work colleagues, lovers and friends.

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Paula Gortázar is a photography researcher, artist and lecturer. In 2018 she completed fully funded PhD at the University of Westminster, specialising in Eastern and Central European photography from the communist period. Paula's artistic practice explores the relation between art and politics. She is particularly interested in the aesthetics of "the political", as well as in contemporary forms of censorship and surveillance in the Western world. Her work has been widely exhibited in Canada, the USA, Germany, the UK and Spain, including venues like The Photographers' Gallery, and published in different international media, such as the *British Journal of Photography* and *EXIT* magazine. She currently lectures in photography at the University of Westminster in London. She currently lectures in photography at the University of Westminster in London.



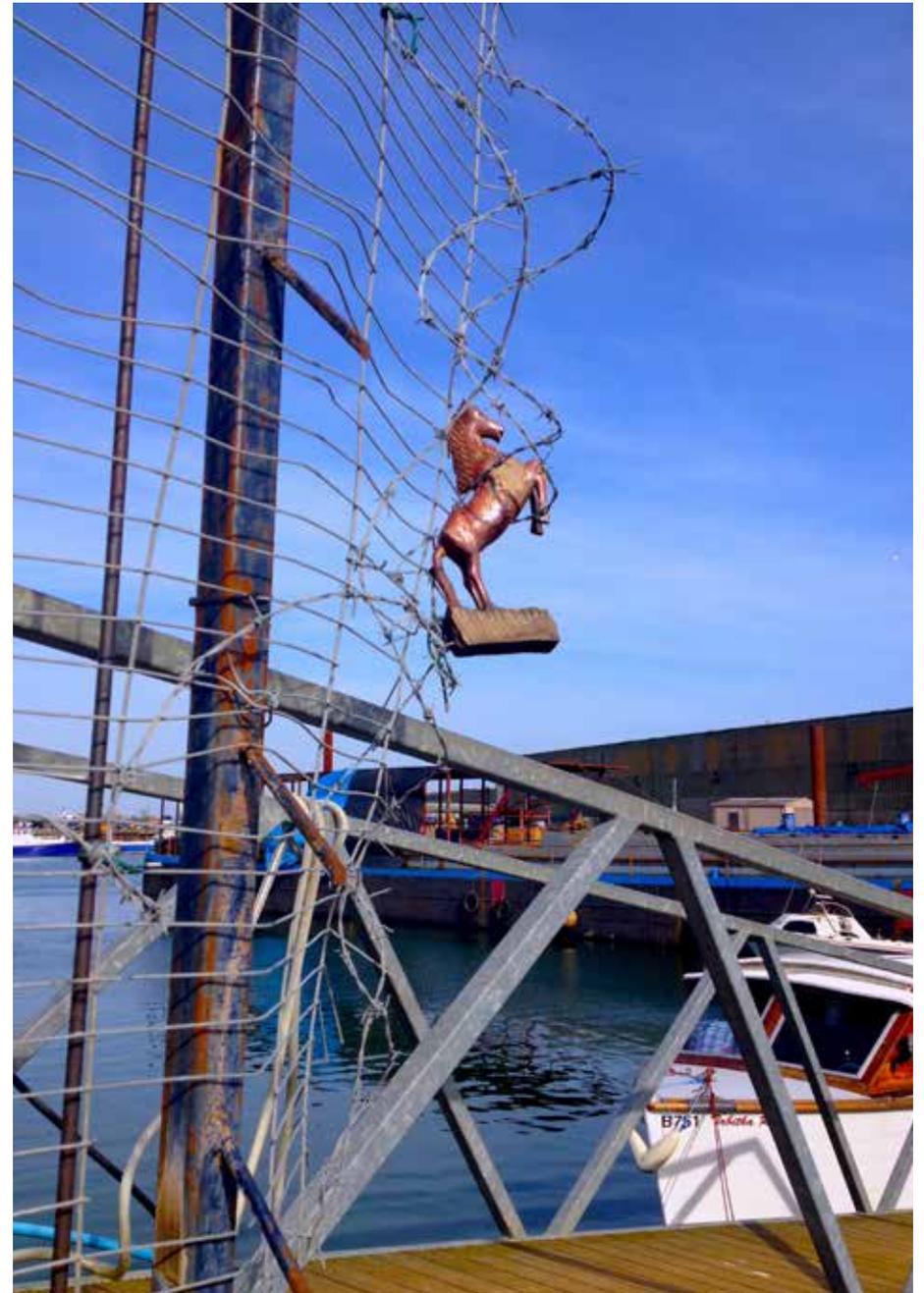
# LIZ J DREW

Liz Johnston Drew works with photography for her visual practice and writing on cultural histories, framed by relationships between politics and aesthetics. She focuses on depictions of local communities and places impacted by imposed change, including ecological as well as economic erosion and resistance of this as manifested in everyday life.

For this exhibition, Liz has contributed two works that seek to collapse the distance between abstract and accessible ideas. Spanning three decades, the photographic diptych *Design. Build. Finance. Operate. Road to Glastonbury 1995* has been presented in various forms, reflecting eco-destruction as escalating into the twenty first century. The short film *They're Not Going To Give It To You* brings together research on open education and visual histories. It was made in 2017, in collaboration with Leo Havemann, at the start of the HS2 rail expansion involving the destruction of city trees and ancient woodlands. Compulsory purchase of homes and land is often imposed to facilitate such controversial, privatized infrastructure projects.

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Liz Johnston Drew is a writer, visual practitioner and independent tutor. She has lectured on various programmes for arts and humanities in Higher Education including as course leader for research methods in History of Art, Film and Visual Media. Johnston Drew has designed many modules at under and postgraduate levels and holds an award for Excellence in Teaching from Birkbeck, University of London. She is actively engaged in open education and is about to submit her PhD thesis *A Poetic Realism: Photography and Equality in the North of England 1968-2018*, an analysis of participatory works as counter-narratives that challenge misrepresentations of “ordinary” life. Johnston Drew is also co-authoring a book relating to research and photography (Routledge 2022).



Liz J Drew, *Compulsory Purchase*, 2015

# ALEXANDRA HUGHES

Alexandra Hughes' exhibited works have been taken from her *Claytactypes* series (2017-2020) and resulted from visceral applications of clay, varnish and oil onto the photographs that confuse the perceived division of matter and image. The evidence of physical human touch on the surface of the photographs simulates the physicality of the landscapes and forms within the images themselves.

In one of the exhibited works, dried traces of fingers are seen as long streaks in clay that mimic a cactus, as well as suggest the motion and movement of sand and wind. This combination of clay and photograph show to share a certain correspondence of appearance, melding into one textural sensory object, the photographs appearing to have been born from earthly processes.

The *Claytactypes* series is reflective of Hughes' processes in her wider practice, which she calls a "wilding"; material-led, impulsive, tactile and disruptive, showing the photographic medium as open to multiplicities of meanings.

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Alexandra Hughes is an artist and academic who disseminates her practice in photography across a variety of contexts. Hughes conducts exhibitions and projects internationally, including recent solo show *Sticky Together*, Jakob Kroon Galeri (2019). Hughes delivers public talks, including at symposium *Talking Photography: Reality Check*, Birkbeck University (2017) as well as curating and chairing exhibition and seminar *Assembly: Critical Reflection On The Photographic Object at Baltic 39* (2018). Hughes was awarded a PhD (Practice-Based Fine Art) at Northumbria University (2019) for research that brought together photography, sculptural materials and performative gesture to explore embodied encounters with photographic objects. Alexandra achieved an MFA at The Slade School of Fine Art (2008).



Alexandra Hughes, 02: From the *Claytactype* series, 2017-2020

# SUKEY PARNELL JOHNSON

Sukey Parnell Johnson's installation originated as a series of experimental films made following her research into images of older women and interlocutory issues of ageism and sexism playing out in still visual media.

In this newly reworked installation, two pieces — *Hagging the Image* and *The Skin You're In* — are presented in dialogue to suggest the polarising dynamics of cultural narratives that combine to delimit performative power. In *Hagging the Image*, a series of fast-paced roundtable discussions, Parnell Johnson gives critical voice to a variety of older women's views on the shortcomings of photographic portrayals, while in *The Skin You're In* she imaginatively explores recurrent tropes in visual representation. By bringing these representations together in continuous movement “in-the-round”, Parnell Johnson breaks up the double-bind attached to visual portrayals of older women in order to remobilise and repoliticise visual media as a confrontation with unconscious and consciously-held cultural attitudes, provoking new knowledge through the interstices between conflicting views.

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Sukey Parnell Johnson comes from a performing background and her photographic work sprang out of a desire to reveal the hidden psychic transitions that accompany female middle and older age and the attendant change in relation of the individual to their mortality and the gaze of society. She has won various awards including being twice a finalist in the Photographic Prize at the National Portrait Gallery with images from her project, *Women of an Uncertain Age*. She completed a PhD by practice at the University of West London in 2018. She is associate lecturer at Kings College in the Medical Humanities programme.



Sukey Parnell Johnson, *Hagging the Image* [Anna Raeburn], 2018  
Sukey Parnell Johnson, *The Skin You're In* [Carrie Grant], 2015

# USCHI KLEIN

Uschi Klein presents three photographs from her series *Divided London United*, which she created between 2012 and 2015. Asking whether it is possible to experience London without the perceived north/south River Thames divide, in this series she seeks to depict people in a variety of places across the city. By using photography as a form of dialogue, Klein's intention is to portray the diversity of characters without seeing people as strangers or places as divides. She observes her surroundings by standing slightly on the edge, neither to interfere nor to be invisible.

The three photographs included in the exhibition reveal fleeting encounters between people, suggesting there is no discernible interaction between them. However, their connections are implicit through the shared space they occupy in London. This connection is transmitted through the camera, which allows the viewer to be part of someone else's world, even if it is just for a short moment.

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Uschi Klein is a researcher, practitioner and lecturer in photography. She holds an MA in photography (Goldsmiths, University of London) and was awarded her PhD from the University of Brighton. Klein has delivered papers on her research at international conferences and her publications include several journal articles and book chapters in edited volumes. In 2021 she was awarded the *10x10 Photobook Research Grant* and the *Peter E. Palmquist Memorial Fund Grant* for her research on women photographers in communist Romania. Her practice focuses on the routine and fluidity of everyday life; her photographs portray how individuals negotiate their sense of space in public places.

[www.uschiklein.com](http://www.uschiklein.com)



Uschi Klein, *Untitled*, London, 2012 (from the series *Divided London United*)

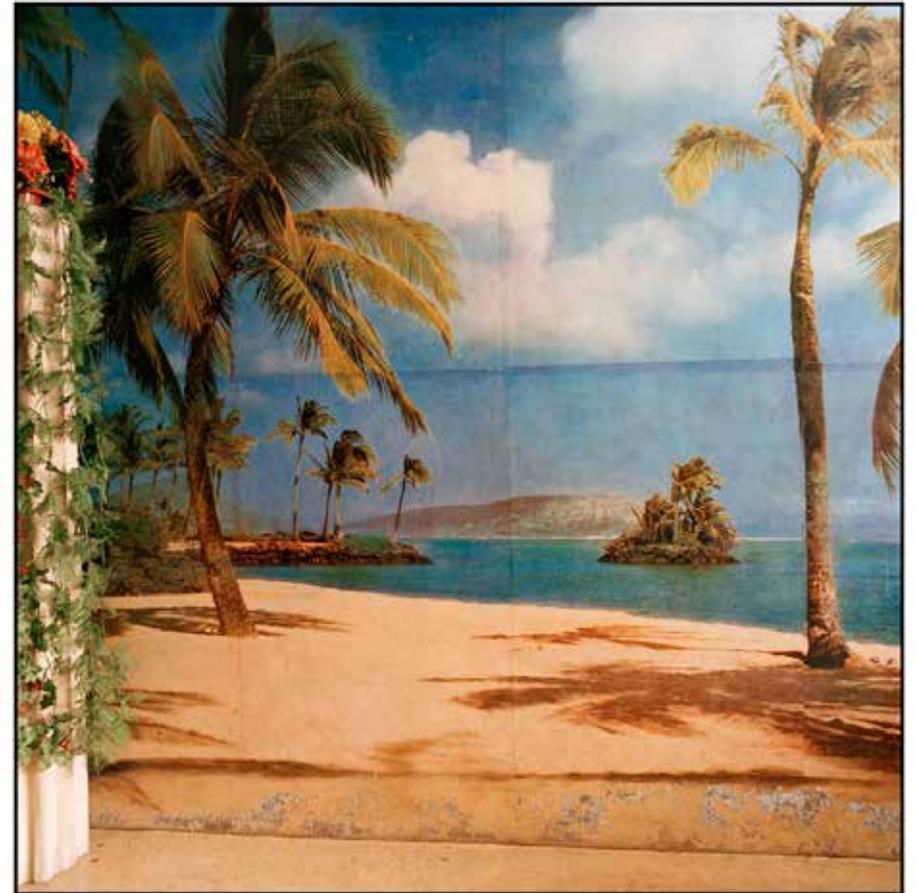
# CAROLINE MOLLOY

The photography studio has traditionally been considered a space in which the aspirations and desires of the sitter in the studio portrait are signified in the portrait mis-en-scène. There is an easily made connection between the props and backdrop seen in early studio photographs and the forms of representation seen in classic portrait painting—such as the pillar and curtain—which were used to denote the wealth, status and class of the sitter.

In this exhibition, Caroline Molloy brings together two of her bodies of work. One is *Untouched Copy* (2008-11) that documents faded patina of photography backdrops in Kerala (India). The other is *Studioscapes* in the *Book of Backgrounds* (2016-20), in which Molloy rebuilds original cartes de viste without the sitters, to reveal the studio backdrop. In bringing together these works, Molloy makes connections between the legacy of early studio photography and its colonial exportation to India.

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**Caroline Molloy** is Programme Director of Fine Art, Digital Arts and Photography at UCA, Farnham. Alongside of which she has recently completed a hybrid practice-based PhD at the Centre for Photography History and Theory, Birkbeck, University of London, where she looked at the photography studio as a place of performance in which transcultural identities are experimented with and performed. Molloy also holds an MA from Goldsmiths in Visual Anthropology and an MA in Photography from the Royal College of Art. Her research interests are focused on the marginalised voice in both gender and post/decolonial contexts.



Caroline Molloy, *Goa Beach with pillar, Njaliparamubu Junction, Fort Cochin, Kerala, 2011*

# ANNALISA SONZOGNI

*DOLMEN*, 2021

Editor: Maya Maffioli; Sound: Enrico Ascoli

In *DOLMEN* Annalisa Sonzogni uses still and moving images of Moscow's Chertanovo housing estate (1972-1983) to explore brutalist architecture as an archaeological site. Those who experience the site become engaged in synoptic surveillance, whereby the many look upon the few and behaviour is monitored. This is mirrored in the architecture itself, which was constructed in such a way that neighbours can easily survey one another across the interior green spaces that were created in-between their individual apartments. Those gigantic buildings are portrayed as modern-day dolmen – megalithic monuments drawing endlessly curious visitors who marvel at the passing of modernity.

Sonzogni installs the work as a triptych composed of two aerial photographs of the buildings and a flat screen in-between them. A record accompanies the work, it was primarily conceived for *DOLMEN* and it also features four further tracks titled *Ecolalia*. The tracks are an imaginary mapping of architecture composed of layered voices, echoes and reverberations, which further enable an encounter with this archaeological site of modernity.

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Annalisa Sonzogni works with photography and moving image in the field of architecture with a specific interest in site-specific installation. Her installations are immersive environments that create a bridge between functional and imaginary spaces. She is a lecturer in Fashion Promotion & Imaging at University for the Creative Arts and associate lecturer in Critical & Historical Studies at Kingston School of Art. Sonzogni's work has been shown at Brera Art Gallery in Milan, Old Lilian Baylis School in London, Italian Cultural Institute in Mexico City and published in *Camera Austria*, *C20 Magazine* and *Afterimage*. She holds a PhD from Kingston University (2015) and an MA from the Royal College of Art (2008).



# LAUREN WINSOR

## *Tête-à-Tête, 2019*

The photograph cannot present that which is not visible on the surface, it can only suggest anything beyond. For decades Raoul Ubac's Photography has been misinterpreted through a misogynistic lens, categorised as a male artist consumed with a desire to inflict pain on the women his work depicts.

Ubac's highly-charged political photographs, created between 1936 and 1940, slice through the icons used to enforce an idealistic cultural surface and perform an autopsy on the conditions of the German totalitarian state. The photo-montages that Ubac produced act as ruptures in both the photographic surface and the fabric of the National Socialist facade he sought to undermine. Lauren Winsor's response to his works is an attempt to bridge the void between image and audience by exploiting ekphrastic text, a form of highly visual language, in order to recontextualise Ubac's photography.

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**Lauren Winsor** is a still life photographer. She received a Masters in Photography from the Royal College of Art, for which she was awarded the Leverhulme Trust award for creativity. Winsor completed a PhD in Art History at the University of Essex, where she held the SPAH doctoral scholarship. Her thesis, supervised by Dawn Ades, explores the innovative photographic processes of the Surrealist photographer Raoul Ubac and reframes his practice as a form of anti-Nazi propaganda. Winsor has lectured in photography since 2005, including a stint as Course Director of the BA Photography programme at Kingston University. She is currently contributing to the BA Fashion Photography course at London College of Fashion.

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