



Image caption: American Signal Corps darkroom staff, ca. 1944 Paris. (Collection.

The Photographer's Assistants #PHRC24

17 - 18 June 2024

**Photographic
History
Research
Centre**



The Photographer's Assistants
#PHRC24

Room: TBA

MONDAY 17 June 2024

9.15–9.45 Registration and coffee

9.45–10.00 Welcome: Kelley Wilder, PHRC

10.00 – 10.45 Keynote Lecture (Chair: Kelley Wilder)

Keynote 1 – TBA

10.45–11.15 Discussion

PANEL 1. AUTHORSHIP AND THE ASSISTANT (CHAIR:)

11:15–11:30 Elena Cooper (University of Glasgow) – *The Photographer's Assistants through a Legal Historical Lens: Copyright, Photography and Industrial Relations in the Late Nineteenth Century*

11:30–11:45 Zsuzsanna Szegedy-Maszák (Hungarian National Museum) – *Creators of Halftones: A Moment in the Spotlight*

11.45–12.00 Fiona Kinsey (Victoria Museums / La Trobe University) – *Sensing in the Dark: The Role of Kodak Australasia Factory Workers in The Making of a Photograph*

12.00–12.30 Discussion

12.30–14.00 LUNCH

PANEL 2. NON-HUMAN ASSISTANTS (CHAIR:)

- 14.00–14.15 **Juliana de la Pava** (Humboldt University) – *Animal agencies and bones turned into photographic memories*
- 14.15–14.30 **Diana Kamin** (Fordham University) – *Prompt Engineer: The Index Card as Assistant*
- 14.30–14.45 **Nina Lager Vestberg** (Norwegian University of Science and Technology) – *Search and Self-Service: Assistance, Automation, and Agency in Post-Digitized Picture Research*
- 14.45–15.15 **Discussion**

PANEL 3. WOMEN’S WORK (CHAIR:)

- 15.15–15.30 **Anja Hysvaer Langgaat** (Norwegian Museum of Cultural History) – *“The Housewife Shift”*
- 15.30–15.45 **Katerina Korola** (University of Minnesota) – *“My Life was the Darkroom”: Women’s Work and its Environment at the Filmfabrik Wolfen.*
- 15.45–16.00 **Pippa Oldfield** (Teesside University) – *Assistants in Cello phane Skirts: ‘Hula Girl’ Photo Concessions and Female Agency in Wartime Hawai’i*
- 16.00 –16.30 **Discussion**
- 16.30–18.00 **Reception (For online guests, 16.30 - 18.00 we welcome you to meet one another on Teams)**
- 18.30 **Conference dinner: Kayal (153 Granby St, LE1 6FE, Leicester)**

Close of Day 1

TUESDAY 18 June 2024

9.00 Registration and coffee

9.15–10.00 Keynote Lecture (Chair:)

Michael Pritchard (The Royal Photographic Society) –
Educating the Photographer's Assistant

10.00–10.30 Discussion

10.30–10.45 Comfort Break

PANEL 4. POINT OF SALE (CHAIR:)

10.45–11.00 **Kris Belden-Adams** (University of Mississippi) – *Recovering the Decisions of 'Invisible' Authors of Commercial Composite Class Portraits with Artificial Intelligence*

11.00–11.15 **Jen Grasso** (University of Brighton) *The Photobooth Technicians Project*

11.15–11.30 **Michelle Henning** (University of Liverpool) – *Push the Kodak!*

11.30–12.00 Discussion

12:00–13.30 LUNCH

PANEL 5. POLITICAL ENVIRONMENTS (CHAIR: GIL PASTERNAK)

13.30–13.45 **Elizabeth Edwards** (PHRC/Oxford) – *The Photographers' Architectural Assistant: Rev. Thomas Perkins' Handbook of Gothic Architecture (1897)*

13.45–14.00 **Idil Cetin** (University of Oslo) – *Photographic Manuals and Photographic Communities. The Case of Yésayi Garabedian*

14.00–14:20 **Discussion**

14.20–14.30 **Comfort break**

PANEL 6. THE ASSISTANT POOL (CHAIR:)

14.30–14.45 **Ella Ravilious** (PHRC/Victoria and Albert Museum) – *From Sèvres Vases to Solar Flares: Photography and the Royal Engineers. 1851-1900*

14.45–15.00 **Sam Hawksford White** (University of Hull) – *‘Records on the Land’: Agency, Evidence and Erosion in 1930s America*

15.00–15.15 **Damian Sutton** (Coventry University) – *‘At work with the Baillie’: Reconfiguring assistantship and creative authorship in the Scots migrant community around Alexander Gardner*

15.15–15.45 **Discussion**

15.45 **Close of Conference**

The Photographer's Assistants
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Room: TBA

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9.15 – 9.45 Registration and coffee

9.45 – 10.00 Welcome: Kelley Wilder, PHRC

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TBA

10.45 – 11.15 Discussion

PANEL 1. AUTHORSHIP AND THE ASSISTANT (CHAIR:)

11:15 - 11:30 Elena Cooper (University of Glasgow) – *The Photographer's Assistants through a Legal Historical Lens: Copyright, Photography and Industrial Relations in the Late Nineteenth Century*

This presentation will explore the role of copyright law – the Fine Arts Copyright Act 1862 - as a source of resistance by ‘photographic assistants’ to late nineteenth century industrial social power relations. By way of background, commercial photography, by the second half of the nineteenth century, was increasingly organised on an industrial model with photographers ‘employed’ by large commercial firms. In the 1890s, a photographic trade union movement was established: The Photographic Assistants’ Union, open to ‘photographic assistants’ or ‘workers’ (and not employers). In this presentation, I will explore how the Fine Arts Copyright Act 1862 – the first legislation expressly to protect photographs (as well as paintings and drawings) – became a tool for photographic worker

empowerment.

Dr Elena Cooper is a copyright lawyer and legal historian at CREATE, the Research Council funded centre for copyright law research at the School of Law, University of Glasgow. She is the author of 'Art and Modern Copyright: The Contested Image' (CUP, 2018), the first in-depth and longitudinal history of copyright relating to the visual arts (specifically: photography, painting and engraving, 1850-1911) which was short-listed in 2020 by the Society of Legal Scholars for the Birks' Book Prize for Outstanding Legal Scholarship.

11:30-11:45 Zsuzsanna Szegedy-Maszák - (Hungarian National Museum) - *Creators of Halftones: A Moment in the Spotlight*

The focus of my paper is the conspicuous double claim of authorship of illustrations in the first four years (1906–1909) of the Hungarian photography journal *A Fény* (“The Light”). Beneath each image, both the photographer and the creator of the halftone plates are named, sometimes twice, with signatures of both “authors” also appearing in the bottom corners of the images themselves. The halftones, printed on glossy paper with guard sheets for full-page reproductions, are presented as highly skilled artistic endeavours, and the prominent placement of information regarding their makers suggests that the editors of the journal believed that its readers had an appreciation not just of photography, but of photomechanical processes. I examine how the disappearance of these names correlated with a changing relationship to the photographic image on the whole and with the rise of the primacy of the photographer, an attitude towards “authorship” in photography which dominated much of the twentieth century.

Zsuzsanna Szegedy-Maszák is a curator of photography at the Hungarian National Museum. During the 2022/2023 academic year she was a visiting professor at Indiana University where she taught courses on the history of photography and art. Previously, Szegedy-Maszák served as the head of Budapest History Museum-Budapest Gallery, and in 2019 she was the curator of Tamás Waliczky: Imaginary Cameras, presented at the 58th Venice Biennale. Her field of interests ranges from nineteenth-century photography to contemporary new media art.

11.45-12.00 Fiona Kinsey (Victoria Museums / La Trobe University) -

Sensing in the Dark. The Role of Kodak Australasia Factory Workers in The Making of a Photograph

The arena of photography is a visual domain where the act of seeing and the concepts of light and dark, contrast and focus are key. However, it is also a space where other senses play an important role. Touch, smell and sound have historically been an integral part of photography, both in photographic practice and in the manufacture and processing of photographic products. Indeed, working with materials that are intrinsically sensitive to light has always required photographers and photographic industry workers to draw on senses other than sight to assist them in their endeavours. Former staff from the Kodak Australasia factory in Melbourne have recalled the numerous ways in which their various senses were employed in the production of the sensitised photographic products that were essential in making a photograph. While photography relies on the eye of the photographer, the science of optics and the gaze of the consumer, it is important not to forget the often invisible and frequently non-visual work of those labouring in the photographic manufacturing industry, which is critical to the process of making a photograph.

12.00 - 12.30 Discussion

12.30 – 14.00 LUNCH

PANEL 2. NON-HUMAN ASSISTANTS (CHAIR:)

14.00 – 14.15 Juliana de la Pava (Humboldt University) - *Animal agencies and bones turned into photographic memories*

One of the most widely used and least questioned forces in the history and theory of photographic production and manufacture has been that of animal bone. Gelatin, produced from the bones and marrow of mainly cows, has been central to the production of photographic film throughout the 20th and part of the 21st century. An important link between the photographic industry and the livestock industry, especially slaughterhouses, is revealed when we focus on an assistant as fundamen-

tal to the history of photography as gelatin. What is the role of animal agencies in the manufacture of photographic artifacts, and which economy of visibility postulates this non-human assistant that is the bone or marrow of hundreds of thousands of cows slaughtered to be turned into human memories? This presentation seeks to answer these questions based on the case of the Kodak Gelatin Corporation, which was discussed by Wall Street Journal journalist Alec Klein in an article entitled “Who Knew Kodak Would Keep So Many Skeletons in Its Closet?” (1999). Drawing on the framework of Critical Animal Studies and a material theory of photography, this presentation attempts to argue that the history of photographic practices and fabrication has always involved extra-human actors sacrificed and modified in the name of Culture and human memory.

Juliana Robles de la Pava holds a PhD in History and Theory of the Arts from the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the University of Buenos Aires (UBA), a Master in Curatorial Studies from the National University of Tres de Febrero (UNTREF) and a Bachelor of Arts (UBA). She has been a doctoral fellow of the National Council of Scientific and Technical Research of Argentina and obtained a doctoral fellowship from the Bunge y Born Foundation and the Espigas Foundation at the Getty Research Institute. She works at the Centro Materia IIAC-UNTREF and obtained a postdoctoral research fellowship at the Käthe Hamburger Centre for Advanced Study, inherit. Heritage in transformation at the Humboldt - Universität zu Berlin for 2024.

14.15 - 14.30 Diana Kamin (Fordham University) - *Prompt Engineer. The Index Card as Assistant*

Before there were image databases, vast photography collections were tracked and stored by adapting filing systems originally designed for text-based systems. At the early stock photography agency, H. Armstrong Roberts, Inc, the founder designed a card cabinet system in the 1920s with identification cards for over three hundred thousand photographs, from Angling to Zoo, which he marketed to advertisers and publishers looking for a ready-made illustration. At the New York Public Library's Picture Collection, artist and librarian Romana Javitz made use of a card catalogue of cross-references to assist a diverse public in searching the collection of millions of clipped reference images grouped in folders labelled by

subject. In each case, the seemingly inert cards took on generative roles among the professionals who cultivated the collections. While assistants at H. Armstrong Roberts ferried the image identification cards around the office as they made sales, Roberts used separate sets of cards to organise his ideas, shuffling them in his pocket as he directed new shoots. This paper looks at how the use of index cards as visual prompts and speculative subject terms designed in advance relates to the contemporary work of prompt engineering, which is central to the use of image generation programs like Midjourney and DALL-E.

Diana Kamin's broad research interests include intersections of visual culture and information history. Her current book, Picture-Work. How Libraries, Museums, and Stock Agencies Launched a New Image Economy, forthcoming from MIT Press, identifies the ways in which the practical work of building 20th century image collections lay the groundwork for today's circulation of images as mobile capital. Her teaching draws on community engaged learning and emphasises explorations of ethics and policy across media.

14.30 – 14.45 Nina Lager Vestberg (Norwegian University of Science and Technology) - *Search and Self-Service. Assistance, Automation, and Agency in Post-Digitized Picture Research*

Picture researchers and photo editors have routinely accessed photographic collections remotely, since long before photographic collections were made searchable online. Skilled library staff received and processed searches in the form of keywords, concepts, and descriptions that were relayed via phone, fax, or letter. The assisted search that these intermediaries provided involved acts of interpretation and creative thinking, in addition to the manual tasks such as retrieving, logging, and parcelling up photographs for delivery to clients. These two kinds of assistance, jointly labelled “search and service”, were the main forms of productive labour in commercial picture libraries until the digitization of image search and delivery in the early 2000s. This paper presents examples of the dynamic that plays out between agents and assistants, human and non-human, in the post-digitised picture industry of the twenty-first century, and shows how they illuminate wider concerns over who is assisting whom in the always-ongoing processes of adopting and adapting to ever-emerging technologies.

Nina Lager Vestberg is a professor of visual culture in the Department of Art and Media Studies and leader of the Media, Data, Museums research group at NTNU, Trondheim. Her research explores the labour, systems, technologies, and infrastructures that underpin visual culture from the early 1800s to the present. Nina's book Picture Research. The Work of Intermediation from Pre-Photography to Post-Digitization (MIT Press) was published in 2023. She can be intermittently found on Bluesky as @lagernina.bsky.social and on Instagram as @mediadatamuseums.

14.45 - 15.15 Discussion

PANEL 3. WOMEN'S WORK (CHAIR:)

15.15 - 15.30 Anja Hysvaer Langaat (Norwegian Museum of Cultural History) – *“The Housewife Shift”*

The photography industry was throughout the 20th century a female-dominated sector, but women had often less visible roles in the darkroom, behind the cash register or as assistants. The photo industry underwent a significant growth in the 1960s and 70s with centralised photofinishers and automated developing and copying. Simultaneously more women entered the paid labour market, largely through part-time work. One considerable challenge for the photofinishing industry was the varied workload throughout the year, depending on the high seasons for photography. In Norway the low season was between January and Easter, while the busiest season was from May to August, when the days were longer, and people had more free time. The demand also varied throughout the week and dependant on the weather. The solution for the Norwegian photofinishers was to hire housewives and students in part-time positions during the busiest seasons. Based on interviews with women working “the housewife shift” in the photofinishing industry in the 1960s and 70s, and their male managers, this paper will examine the development in terms of labour conditions for women working in the photofinishing industry, but also how the Norwegian photofinishing industry relied on housewives in an increasingly pressured market.

Anja Hysvaer Langaat is a curator and photo historian at the Norwegian Museum of

Cultural History. Master's degree in *History from the University of Oslo (2009)*. From 2019-2021 she was part of a research project on the history of photography in Norway and is one of three authors of the forthcoming book about the history of photography in Norway 1940-2010. Anja's main fields of interests are business history, marketing, vernacular photography and colour photography. She has published several articles about the Norwegian photofinishing industry and their relationship with international companies such as *Kodak*.

15.30- 15.45 Katerina Korola (University of Minnesota) – “*My Life was the Darkroom*”. *Women's Work and its Environment at the Filmfabrik Wolfen*.

Recalling her time at the VEB Filmfabrik Wolfen, the chemical worker Edda Koch recounted that although the job was not physically demanding, the darkness made it difficult to endure. Located at the center of East Germany's so-called “Chemical Triangle,” the Filmfabrik Wolfen was the largest source of colour still and motion picture film in the Eastern Bloc. The manufacture of these materials was carried out by a largely female workforce in dark rooms lit only by red safelights. “My life was the darkroom,” Koch stated flatly. Some days, she arrived before the sun rose, and left after it had set. The work of women like Koch is documented in a series of photographs created by the industrial photographer Wolfgang G. Schröter between 1955 and 1972, which together offer a behind-the-scenes tour of the Filmfabrik Wolfen. Although this glimpse behind the scenes was nothing if not carefully managed, the photographs nonetheless intimate the working conditions faced by the factory's female workforce, which, in addition to the darkness, included regular exposure to toxic chemicals. Placing Schröter's series into conversation with accounts of the factory's working conditions and ecological footprint, this paper approaches these photographs as an unlikely archive that not only reveals the material conditions of photographic production, but also prompts us to reflect on its toxicity, the environmental consequences of which continue to be felt in the region today.

Katerina Korola is an art historian and media scholar whose research explores the history of photography and film through an ecological lens. She holds a joint-PhD in Art History and Cinema & Media Studies from the University of Chicago and is currently Assistant Professor at the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities, where she is working on her first book, Picturing the Air. Photography and the Industrial At-

mosphere. Her research has appeared in the Journal of Visual Culture, Representations, Photographica, and Transbordeur.

15.45 - 16.00 Pippa Oldfield (Teesside University) - *Assistants in Cellophane Skirts. 'Hula Girl' Photo Concessions and Female Agency in Wartime Hawai'i*

This paper reveals a hitherto unstudied image economy at the nexus of imperialism, militarism and tourism. The 'hula girl' photo industry thrived in Hawai'i following the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, which prompted a vastly increased presence of the US Navy in the Islands, and in Honolulu in particular. As well as the photographs themselves, I examine the numerous adverts in wartime Honolulu local newspapers, news articles in the US press, a photo-essay for Life magazine, and memoirs and oral histories of both Hawai'ian women and US servicemen. While the industry could clearly be unsavoury, women often demonstrated agency and power in their assistant roles. salaries far exceeded what women might earn in other low-status jobs, attracting not only models but printers, managers and even concession owners. Far from being passive recipients of servicemen's lust and the photographic gaze, these women demonstrated entrepreneurialism, resourcefulness, and a willingness to exploit the stereotypes and desires of mainstream American culture.

Dr Pippa Oldfield is a curator, photo-historian and Senior Lecturer in Photography at Teesside University, UK. Her research investigates the ways in which photography intersects with gender, conflict, politics and history. As former Head of Programme at Impressions Gallery, Bradford, she has curated numerous national touring exhibitions including 'No Man's Land. Women's Photography and the First World War' (2017-19). She is the author of Photography and War (Reaktion 2019) and co-editor of Picturing Peace. Photography, Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding (Bloomsbury, available for pre-order). She is currently working on a new book, Ungentle Camera. War and Women's Photography.

16.00 – 16.30 Discussion

16.30 – 18.00 Reception (For online guests, 16.30 - 18.00 we welcome you to meet one another on Teams)

18.30 Conference dinner: Kayal (153 Granby St, LE1 6FE, Leicester)

Close of Day 1

TUESDAY 18 June 2024

9.00 Registration and coffee

9.15 – 10.00 Keynote Lecture (Chair:)

Michael Pritchard (The Royal Photographic Society) - *Educating the Photographer's Assistant*

Dr Michael Pritchard FRPS is Director, Education and Public Affairs at The Royal Photographic Society. For twenty years he was a Director and photography specialist at Christie's, London, before leaving to complete his PhD which examined aspects of British photographic history. He has taught and acted as a consultant to a number of photography organisations. Michael Pritchard has lectured and broadcast internationally and is a regular writer on photography. He has written a number of books, most recently Photographers (2012) and was an advisor and contributor on the Encyclopaedia of Nineteenth Century Photography (2008), a contributor to Photography. The Whole Story (2012), Phaidon's Design Classics (2006) and to The Oxford Companion to the Photograph (2005), Photographers (2012), A History of Photography in 50 Cameras (2014) amongst others.

10.00 – 10.30 Discussion

10.30– 10.45 Comfort Break

PANEL 4. POINT OF SALE (CHAIR:)

10.45 - 11.00 Kris Belden-Adams- (University of Mississippi) - *Recovering the Decisions of 'Invisible' Authors of Commercial Composite Class Portraits with Artificial Intelligence*

Like most then-popular composite group class portraits, the image personifying all 247 students of the Harvard University Class of 1887 was created by practitioners in a commercial studio. To make it, an unnamed photographer at Lovell Photo sequentially exposed the members' portraits on a light-sensitive plate after meticulously aligning and resizing each negative by the axis of their eyes and the center of the face. The photography studio assumed credit for authorship of these composites, which lucratively were sold as keepsakes to members of the class, their families, and to universities. But authorship matters. Artificial intelligence and facial recognition suggest that the mathematical likelihood of inclusion of each of the portraits of all 247 class members varies significantly. The author of this image chose certain images over others, gave a few of them greater prominence, and omitted many of the classmates altogether. Although we will never know why the unnamed author of this composite felt biased toward inclusion or exclusion of certain images, A.I. allows us to rediscover those "invisible practitioner's" decisions and speculate, with the benefit of the image's commercial socio-economic contexts, about the reasons for doing so. This presentation explores the anonymous authorship of many images from commercial photography practices such as this one, while also presenting results from the A.I. analysis of Lovell Photo's Class of 1887, Harvard University, which re-illuminate the individual agency of these unnamed makers.

Kris Belden-Adams is an Associate Professor of Art History at the University of Mississippi, and specialises in the history of photography. She is the author of Photography, Temporality, Modernity. Time Warped (2019), and Photography, Eugenics, Aristogenics'. Picturing Privilege (2020). In addition, she is an editor and contributor to the volumes Photography and Failure. One Medium's Incessant Entanglement with Mishaps, Flops, and Disappointments (2017), and Diverse Histories in Photographic Albums. 'These Are Our Stories' (2022). With Dr. Karen Barber, Belden-Adams is a Content Co-Editor for Smarthistory's/Khan Academy's coverage of the history of photography.

11.00 - 11.15 Jen Grasso – (University of Brighton) *The Photobooth Technicians Project*

The Photobooth Technician's Project is a community archive project

created by, and for, members of the analogue photobooth community to bring together the histories and experiences of the profession before these machines become obsolete. Informed by historical research tracing the chronology of the photobooth and its different formats, this project, and this presentation, looks at the role the technician has played in the development of the automatic photographic vending machine since its inception in 1925, as well as how it has evolved throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, navigating challenges such as the advent of digital photography and more current issues such as issues in supply lines, all of which has driven the formation of a grassroots community.

Jen Grasso (BFA Photography, MA Curating Collections & Heritage, PGCert Archival Studies) is the Digital Content Systems Co-Ordinator at the University of Brighton Design Archives. Her research lies in the intersection between analogue and digital technologies, and the use of technology to democratise culture and heritage. She has also worked as an analogue and digital photobooth technician since 2015. @photobooth-technicians on Instagram, @btnphotobooth on Twitter/X, @brightonphotobooth.bsky.social

11.15-11.30 Michelle Henning (University of Liverpool) – *Push the Kodak!*

This paper looks at Boots' Photographic Department sales assistants in the Interwar period (1920s and '30s). Or rather, it looks at what the in-house Boots Merchandise Bulletin instructed these assistants to do and reads between the lines for the role assistants play in the shaping of photographic tastes, practices and expertise. In particular, I examine how they were told to encourage customers to consume more, or consume differently, how they pushed certain products and not others —and through this how assistance (usually understood as 'help') is actually a means to channel the priorities of both Boots the Chemist and the photographic companies. This is sometimes met with resistance from customers, which is also reflected in the Bulletin, for example in commentary on frustrated attempts to get people to buy enlargements or consume more film. I will address changing approaches to camera sales in the face of a growing number of Box Brownie-wielding customers and changing seasonal priorities. I will also consider the role of female assistants explaining technical aspects to male customers, as represented in the Boots' 1935 promo-

tional film “How Others See Us”.

Michelle Henning is Professor in Photography and Media in the School of the Arts at the University of Liverpool. She is the author of Photography. The Unfettered Image (Routledge 2018) and of numerous essays on photography, most recently “Keeping Out the Fog” in Photoresearcher 41 (The Darkroom Special Issue, 2024). In 2018 she was awarded an AHRC Leadership Fellowship to conduct research in the archives of Ilford Limited. This work forms the basis of her next book which will be on the interwar chemical photography industry, empire and atmosphere.

11.30 - 12.00 Discussion

12:00 – 13.30 Lunch

PANEL 4. POLITICAL ENVIRONMENTS (CHAIR: GIL PASTERNAK)

13.30-13.45 Elizabeth Edwards (PHRC/Oxford) – *The Photographers’ Architectural Assistant. Rev. Thomas Perkins’ Handbook of Gothic Architecture (1897)*

This paper is about a handbook as photographic assistant. Through 1894 and 1895 a series of articles on medieval architecture appeared in the pages of *The Amateur Photographer*, written by the Rev Thomas Perkins from Turnworth in Dorset. They formed a vade mecum for the guidance of photographers so as “to enable them to use their cameras intelligently”. The articles were gathered and published, with extensive photographic illustrations, in book form in 1897. As increasing numbers of amateur photographers tried their hand at architectural and record photography in response to ideas of photographic survey, there was a desire for guidance that would make their photographs more ‘worthwhile’ and ‘useful’. While overtly ‘for’ photographers and full of technical snippets, the emphasis of the book is on architecture, as a missing body of knowledge amongst photographers, rather than photography itself. Perkins’ intention was to hone the attentive skills and observational power of photographers. that is, to ‘assist’ the development of a historically attentive eye in order to enhance the informational potential of photographs. Positioned in an environment of an increasingly dispersed yet deliberate and democratised engagement

with the past, Perkins' 'assistant' consolidated ideas of socially and morally valuable photographic work.

*Elizabeth Edwards is a visual and historical anthropologist, and Professor Emerita of Photographic History at De Montfort University, Leicester, where she was founding Director of PHRC. She has Honorary Professorships in the Department of Anthropology University College London, and University of Durham. From 2016-22 she was Andrew W. Mellon Visiting Professor at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Until 2005 she was Curator of Photographs at Pitt Rivers Museum and lecturer in visual anthropology at ISCA, University of Oxford, where she is now Research Affiliate. She was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 2015. Her most recent monograph is *Photographs and the Practice of History. a short primer* (2022).*

13.45-14.00 Idil Cetin (University of Oslo) - *Photographic Manuals and Photographic Communities. The Case of Yesayi Garabedian*

Photographic manuals were among the most prominent assistants of photographers of the 19th century. Starting from the announcement of the daguerreotype to the public onwards, such manuals continued to be published regularly over the years in several languages and presented the most recent procedures of technical image production. These manuals can be perceived as exhaustive communications between various practitioners of photography and entailed information much more detailed than the one available in articles on photographic experiments and trials published in periodicals. Readers of these manuals were mainly amateur photographers, majority of whom were "gentlemen of science," who used to be engaged in various scientific fields as a respectable leisure activity and who were now taking an interest in photography due to their background in these fields. But there were other readers of these manuals, those who consulted these books to learn photography, but who did not come from distinguished backgrounds with a high education level, and who were devoid of a circle of photography enthusiasts to communicate with about image making methods. In my presentation, I will focus on one such case, that of Yesayi Garabedian, known in the history of photography as the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem who opened a photographic studio in the monastery of the Patriarchate.

14.00 – 14:20 Discussion

14.20– 14.30 Comfort break

PANEL 6. THE ASSISTANT POOL (CHAIR:)

14.30 - 14.45 Ella Ravilious (PHRC/Victoria and Albert Museum) –
From Sèvres Vases to Solar Flares. Photography and the Royal Engineers. 1851-1900

Men from the Royal Engineers acted as photographic assistants, photographic printers, and designers of photographic technology at the South Kensington Museum from the 1850s until 1900. They were barracked at the Museum and trained in photography in return for acting as fire pickets, printers, builders, security and sundry other tasks. The Engineers were largely responsible for printing photographs taken by the Museum, for example printing photographs of art objects taken by Charles Thurston Thompson for circulation to art schools around the UK. In the 1850s their photographic training for the War Office also included photography of the construction of Museum buildings and artistic views intended as reference images for art students. The training they received in photography was then used by the War Office to document Imperial projects, conflicts and survey missions across the world. They also acted as assistants to scientists at the Museum such as William de Wiveleslie Abney and Norman Lockyer, engaged in scientific research using photographic methods. Drawing on research by Cardoso Denis on the Museum and the military, this paper will locate this activity specifically at the South Kensington Museum, and will uncover the trajectories of individual Royal Engineers for the first time to illuminate the Museum's role in military-cultural contexts during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Ella Ravilious is Curator, Architecture and Design in the Art, Architecture, Photography and Design Department at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. She is studying for a PhD in the history of the V&A's Photography Collection at the Photographic History Research Centre at De Montfort University, Leicester. With Professor Elizabeth Edwards she co-edited the volume What Photographs Do. The Making and Remaking of Museum Cultures, published by UCL Press in November 2022. Her latest book about

her grandfather's artistic career, *Eric Ravilious. Landscapes and Nature*, was published by Thames and Hudson/V&A in 2023.

14.45 - 15.00 Sam Hawksford White (University of Hull) - '*Records on the Land*'. *Agency, Evidence and Erosion in 1930s America*

The visual culture of soil science during the Depression years was undoubtedly complex, converging inconsistently with the socially and economically engaged documentary style practiced in better known relief agencies such as the Farm Security Administration. Drawing on concepts from the sociology of science, this paper will situate photographic materials that accumulated during two collaborative erosion research projects. first at the Conservation Experiment Station in Bethany, Missouri between 1930 and 1942, and second in physiographic studies conducted by the Soil Conservation Service's Division of Research near Spartanburg, South Carolina from 1936-7. The paper argues that the visual agency of individual technicians has remained essentially underexamined and, through considering the notion of photographic uncertainty, seeks to frame the ambiguity of the survey image and its ability to reflect subjective visuality whilst aiming towards more comprehensive records of environmental and physical change.

15.00 - 15.15 Damian Sutton (Coventry University) - '*At work with the Baillie*'. reconfiguring assistantship and creative authorship in the Scots migrant community around Alexander Gardner

This paper presents new primary research into the cadre of photographers who worked around Alexander Gardner during the later years of the American Civil War. For decades, Paisley-born Gardner has been justifiably lauded as one of the leading figures in photography of the war, even though so much of his gallery's output was historically credited to his one-time employer Mathew B. Brady. It is ironic, therefore, that even as Gardner's significance has been better understood, those who worked with him and through his gallery have been described in canonical works as assistants, operators, and 'Gardner employees', rather than photographers or artists. Furthermore, in modern scholarship Gardner continues to be jointly or solely credited for their images even where evidence establishes their authorship. This cadre was brought together mostly through Gard-

ner's association with the Scots expatriate community in Maryland and the District of Columbia. Some came via the local St Andrews Society, whilst others were Gardner's family or old Paisley connections. The paper focuses on previously under-researched members, such as John Reekie and James F. Gibson, and explores the formation of this group by approaching them as citizen photographers analogous to the citizen soldier. trained to a task at hand that had great import, but who ultimately returned to 'civilian' life after the war.

15.15 – 15.45 Discussion

15.45 Close of Conference

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