

MHRD Scheme on Global Initiative on Academic Networks (GIAN)

Course Title: Photographic Theories and Practices

**Taught by Professor Christopher Pinney, University College, London
and**

Ms. Taina Meller, George Eastman Museum, Rochester

28th October - 8th November, 2019



Overview

Photography has had a long and complex history that has engaged the world since the mid nineteenth century. It is an essential aspect of the visual excess that characterizes human living today. Photography has long been recognized as an important field of study and practice, with its own area of problematics and investigations, especially since the cultural and visual turns in the humanities. Hence media, the sciences, governments, and everyday social and familial life have become of the chief domains that have actively engaged the camera, using diverse photographic formats including journalism, art, commercial photography and portraiture, to name a few. India has had a rich internal history of photography, even as the discipline's theoretical discourse and practical technologies have constantly borne the influence of global developments. The proposed GIAN course would cover key practical as well as theoretical dimensions of photography through lectures and tutorials by two leading international figures in the field. It will be beneficial for practitioners of photography, artists, conservators, archivists, mediapersons, journalists, theoreticians, critics and curators in addition to anyone engaged with the medium in any capacity.

A total of 10 lectures shall be divided between sessions dealing with the history and theory of photography (5 lectures of 2 hours each by Prof. Christopher Pinney, University College, London) and the care and identification of photographs (5 sessions of 2 hours each by Ms. Taina Meller, George Eastman Museum, Rochester). Attendees of the course shall have to come to all lectures in order to receive a certificate.

Objectives

The primary objectives of the course are as follows:

- To give a historical overview of the key theoretical and material developments in photography since the mid 19th century
- To understand key texts on photographic theory, which also connect with the larger academic fields of culture studies, politics, visual culture and media studies
- To gain basic understanding of the physical and chemical properties of photographs, to develop skills in photographic process identification, and to learn about preservation practices for photographic materials. This shall develop future interest in practices of archiving and preserving photographs in public and private collections of India
- To allow attendees of the course to go on to locate Indian photography within the larger historical trajectory of the camera's operations

Course Details

Duration: 28th October – 8th November, 2019

Part I: 28th October – 1st November, 2019

Ms. Taina Meller, Conservator in Charge, George Eastman Museum, Rochester, New York

(Each of the following sessions will include a one-hour lecture followed by a hands-on tutorial. The tutorials will allow the participants to practice process identification by looking at actual photographs in small group settings)

Days 1 to 4

Lectures 1, 2, 3 and 4: Identification and preservation of photographs - The first four lectures will provide an introduction to the history, making, and identification of photographic materials prominent in the 19th and 20th centuries. The audience will be introduced to photographic processes such as daguerreotype; tintype; ambrotype; albumen, collodion and gelatin silver; and chromogenic color. Subsequently, the most common causes and mechanisms of deterioration, as well as preservation of these materials will be discussed.

Day 5

Lecture 5: Preservation practices - This lecture will focus on general preservation practices, such as handling, storage environment and exhibiting photographic materials. Photograph conservation as a profession will also be discussed.

Part II: 4th – 8th November, 2019

Professor Christopher Pinney, University College London, UK

(The following lectures are 2 hours each)

Day 1: Photographic theory. We start the course looking at fundamental approaches to photography, exploring ‘ontological’ versus ‘constructivist’ approaches. Key texts by Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes and John Tagg will be considered. We will also explore how the history of Indian photography could contribute to these debates.

Day 2: World System Photography. The development of photography in India will be positioned within a general history of photographic development. The role of global networks and global imaginaries will be traced from 1840 through to the present.

Day 3: Waterhouse, Bourne, and Deen Dayal. This lecture will shift the focus to three very significant and different late nineteenth-century photographers. A detailed account of their biography and practice will be explored as an alternative to a generalized account of ‘photography’. This will open up questions of political identity, cultural location and aesthetic intention.

Day 4: Territories and Networks: How ‘Indian’ is Indian Photography? To what extent does photography in India reproduce pre-existing aesthetic conventions and expectations? How best should we understand the proliferation of painted photographs? Does the concern with what has been termed ‘post-dating’ (the citation of the archive in contemporary work) mark the triumph of the ‘local’?

Day 5: The Civil Contract of Photography in India. Recent theoretical realignments have unsettled negative evaluations of photography that stressed the ‘gaze’, and notions of ‘discipline’. Azoulay’s ‘civil contract’ model stresses the egalitarian political potential in making ‘photographic citizenship’ available. The lecture explores this in relation to transformations in photographic practice and apparatus, from the nineteenth century through to the present.



Taina Meller is Conservator in Charge at the Kay R. Whitmore Conservation Center at the George Eastman Museum, Rochester, New York. After graduating from the EVTEK Institute of Art and Design, Vantaa, Finland, she worked as a photograph conservator for a number of major institutions in Helsinki, Finland, including The Finnish Museum of Photography and the Finnish National Gallery. In 2003, Ms. Meller became an Andrew W. Mellon Fellow in the 3rd cycle of the Advanced Residency Program in Photograph Conservation at the George Eastman Museum and the Image Permanence Institute, Rochester, New York. During the two-year fellowship she focused on the daguerreotype. In 2005, she became the Andrew W. Mellon Fellow at the Sherman Fairchild Center for Works on Paper and Photographic Conservation at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, where she continued her research on the daguerreotype. In 2007, Ms. Meller returned to the George Eastman Museum as Associate Conservator, and has held her current position since 2009. Over time, she has conducted various workshops and supervised numerous conservation fellows and interns. She continues to teach students in the Photographic Preservation and Collection Management master's degree program, offered jointly by the George Eastman Museum and the University of Rochester. Ms. Meller holds professional affiliations to the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, Photographic Materials Group (AIC-PMG); International Council of Museums, Committee for Conservation (ICOM-CC); and the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC), Nordic Group, Finnish Section.

**Ms. Taina Meller,
George Eastman
Museum, Rochester, New
York, USA**

Kay R. Whitmore Conservation
Center
George Eastman Museum
900 East Avenue
Rochester, NY 14620

tmeller@eastman.org
Tel: +1(585)327-4902

Who can attend

Students of all degree levels, teachers, practitioners of photography, museum studies, art and visual studies, critics, curators, journalists, media persons, archivists, museologists, art conservationists in private and government organisations. Anyone else interested in the subject.

Preregistration and Fees

Prior registration is mandatory for all students as per the procedure provided on the GIAN web portal.
MA and M Phil students of JNU: Free
Ph.D students and Faculty of JNU: INR 1000
Students of other recognised educational institutions: INR 1000
Faculty/professionals from other recognised educational institutions: Rs. 2000
Participants from abroad: USD 500

Course Coordinator: Dr. Suryanandini Narain
Assistant Professor of Visual Studies, School of Arts and Aesthetics
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi 110068

Christopher Pinney is Professor of Anthropology and Visual Culture at University College London. He has held visiting positions at the Australian National University, University of Chicago, University of Cape Town, Northwestern University, Boğaziçi University (Istanbul), and Jagiellonian University (Krakow). He has also taught courses and workshops at Gyanpravaha (Mumbai), Tsukuba (Japan), National College of Art (Lahore), and PhotoKathmandu. His research interests cover the art and visual culture of South Asia, with a particular focus on the history of photography and chromolithography in India. He has also worked on industrial labor and Dalit goddess possession. He gave the Panizzi Lectures at the British Library in 2006, the Ramakrishna Nataraja Lecture in 2010 (Hyderabad), the Gerbrands Memorial Lecture (Leiden) in 2014, the M.N. Srinivas Memorial Lecture (London) in 2015 and the Ruth Morris Bakwin Art Lecture (Wellesley) in 2016. He was awarded a Padma Shri for contributions to Literature and Education in 2013. Amongst his publications are *Camera Indica* (1997), 'Photos of the Gods' (2004), *The Coming of Photography in India* (2008) and *Photography and Anthropology* (2011). Collaboration with the photographer Suresh Punjabi resulted in an exhibition 'Studio Suhag!' in Delhi in 2013, and the publication of *Artisan Camera: Studio Photography from Central India* (2013). A book about mirages, *The Waterless Sea* and another about printing and punishment in India, *Lessons from Hell*, were out in 2017 and 2018 respectively.



**Professor Christopher
Pinney, University
College London, UK**

Department of Anthropology,
University College London, 14
Taverton St
London WC1H 0BW

c.pinney@ucl.ac.uk
Tel: 0044-207-679-8634

The fee includes all instruction materials. Readings for the sessions will be made available to the registered participants in early October.

For Registration: <http://www.gian.iitkgp.ac.in/GREGN/index> or
visit <http://www.gian.iitkgp.ac.in/GREGN/index>

Total number of seats available is 60
Registration will be done on first-come-first-served basis

Tel: +91 – 9811099657
Email: suryanandini@jnu.ac.in