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INTRODUCTION

Global Photographies and Questions of Cultural Translation

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How would it change our perspective of contemporary photography to encounter it first from the viewpoint of Bogotá or Beirut, Taipei or Cape Town? It would be uncontroversial to state that historically, the global discussion around photography has been dominated by the countries surrounding the North Atlantic, frequently referred to in shorthand as ‘the West’. Too often works from beyond these self-appointed centers of photography culture have been given exposure to the degree that they conform to pre-established conventions or diverge from them in ways that might be regarded as desirably exotic within established photographic markets. Dramatic changes have unfolded since the start of the twenty-first century; an increasingly world-facing and inclusive system of photography institutions is opening rapidly to international photographers and the ideas that frame their work. The last decade has seen an explosion of books and exhibitions about photography from around the world, in many cases produced by figures rooted in the sites of production. Examples include La Maison Européenne de Photographie in Paris teaming up with the Arab World Institute to launch the Photography Biennial of the Contemporary Arab World (2016–17); The Monash Gallery of Art in Melbourne mounting the survey *Visions of India: From the Colonial to the Contemporary* (2022), London’s Tate Modern presenting the exhibition, *A World in Common: Contemporary African Photography* (Bonsu 2023); or the New York Museum of Modern Art’s deciding to dedicate its *New Photography* show (2023) to works made by photographers with a connection to Lagos, Nigeria. Photographic work now travels from all directions to international photography festivals in Dhaka, São Paulo, Sharjah, Seoul, etc. (FotoRoom 2024). These contemporary activities are underpinned by emerging scholarship around the photography of the past. New histories of photography are being written that bring forward images and makers from previously underrepresented parts of the world (e.g. Diack et. al. 2020; Fernández 2011; Hung 2016). Collective and personal photographic archives are being gathered that make it possible for the specificities of lived experience to be acknowledged, studied, and shared across cultures.

Yet we cannot assume that the boom in attention to previously overlooked photographic activity has delivered an international shared fluency in photography ideas, that we necessarily see or mean the same things. Just because photographs and their associated texts travel does not mean that the project of photographic world building is the same in differ-

ent cultural contexts. Established approaches to scholarship need to be reconsidered for a broader range of perspectives to come into focus. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith has argued in her pioneering work on decolonizing education, the structures of Western research claim a power to classify, represent, compare, and evaluate any non-Western materials that they encounter, but rest on assumptions that may actively prevent the realities of marginalized subjects from being expressed or understood (Smith 1999). In this context, it is hardly surprising that much of the pioneering work opening contemporary photography scholarship to a broader range of world views has come from the Global South and Asia. A more extensive array of voices has increased what it is possible to say, in the same way that a wider set of photographic perspectives has expanded the images it is possible to make. This is a very exciting moment for photography.

Although there is an increasing recognition of the ways that we are interconnected across the boundaries of nations, there are very few texts that meaningfully describe the entanglement of our difference and sameness, a cultural problem described by theorists such as Sarah Nutall (2009) following on from studies of entanglement within posthuman philosophies and science (Barad 2007). In her work about the literature of post-apartheid South Africa, Nutall uses the figure of entanglement to reflect on the inadequacy of dualisms such as center/periphery, colonizer/colonized, and self/other, or the certainties underlying existing global debates about race, identity, or power. New knowledge can emerge if we are willing to enter the fray and risk exploring our complicated involvements with each other. An acknowledgment of entanglement requires us to keep our eye on detail as well as the big picture, to attend to the complex particularities of the matter at hand, without neglecting subject positions including our own.

Photography, Photographies

This volume challenges received ideas about photography from many different standpoints. It is a complex task to build a shared conversation while maintaining the specificities of language and experience that emerge from distinct contexts. In many cases, we needed to interrogate the most basic terms to make sure that the weight that they carry in different contexts is acknowledged and to propose a shared platform from which to explore different positions and positionalities.

In an age of camera phones and AI-assisted computer imaging, it may seem anachronistic to discuss ‘photography’ – rather than a more diffuse image culture – at all. As we hope the following chapters will confirm, for our contributors around the world, the term photography (in its various languages) remains both meaningful and a point of interconnection. Photography continues to have relevance as a set of technologies, image-making practices, conventions, and traditions, as a field of study, as a set of material images appearing on various substrates, and as a meeting point for communities of makers and audiences. Photography is not defined merely by lens-based image making – film-based, digital, augmented and even computer-generated – but also by the possibilities it produces for communication, expression, illumination, and transformation. As a visual medium, photography can in some ways circumvent language barriers, offering shared experience, yet our understanding of photographs may require many words, particularly in translation from one culture to another.

As this is an academic book, we acknowledge from the start that the texts within it are rooted in educational systems that theorize photography as an important cultural and

artistic form, though these vary a great deal from country to country. As touched upon in several chapters, some parts of the world have taught photography practice, history, and theory from within art schools and universities since the mid-20th century boom in photographic education, in many cases bearing the imprint of colonial histories. The term ‘art’ might be undesirable in some contexts, carrying baggage of colonial elitism or nationalist pretension (Zhuang 2016), while elsewhere the notion of art offers a welcome space outside of photography’s everyday functionalities, positively associated with agency, expression, and resistance (Soutter 2018). Art is an assumed touchstone for photographers who have received academic training, and worked within international contemporary art networks of galleries, museums, and fairs. Art is not necessarily a reference point for photographers working outside or alongside these frameworks. In this book we see networks of production and dissemination developing across local and regional contexts in a way that promises to offer an antidote to an artificial historical polarity between photography and art.

Photography is booming around the world, notably in the ‘Majority World’ – the term formulated in the 1990s by Bangladeshi photographer and activist Shahidul Alam to describe the countries where most of the world’s populations reside (Alam 2008). Coined to underline the fact that a small number of developed economies have held outsized influence over world affairs, Alam’s term offers a shift in mindset, encouraging us to look more seriously at the photography of and from underrepresented cultures. Photography is emergent as an ambitious cultural form, including in places where no formal academic study of the medium is available. As our contributors elaborate, photographers can develop their skills and understanding independently outside of educational institutions: through a growing number of photography centers, such as PannaFoto Institute in Indonesia, Hydra + Fotografía in Mexico City, the Contemporary Image Collective (CIC) in Cairo, or in workshops run by international foundations like World Press Photo and Magnum (both with roots in photojournalism and press photography). Mobile phones and the internet allow amateur photographers to develop their knowledge and understanding of the field without formal training. In the 21st century, new courses have opened in countries that previously did not support the academic study of photography. Examples include the Photography Degree at Universidad de Bogotá Jorge Tadeo Lozano in Colombia, the Bachelor of Social Science in Photography at Pathshala in Dhaka, Bangladesh, or the two-year course at The Photography Training Center (CFP) in Bamako, Mali (Photo Tool 2016).

Photographic values vary wildly from place to place. From Hanoi to Mumbai to London, different kinds of imagery are considered appropriate or forbidden to regard, in accordance with the movement of local laws and customs. This is not simply a matter of freedom of expression, as Western perspectives might suggest, but rather frameworks of limitations and collective trajectories emerging from specific times and locations. For example, scenes of partially clothed children were a mainstay of Anglo-American art photography in the late nineteenth century but have evoked censure and moral panic on both sides of the Atlantic in recent decades as bordering on child pornography (Higonnet 1998). In some cases, images that cannot be exhibited on one country can be freely viewed elsewhere. Perhaps more instructive than the forms of censorship at play in specific contexts are the ingenious ways that photographers negotiate their practices to make the images they consider necessary within complex political and legal parameters (Đào and Phạm 2022). Photographers and curators in various contexts may also work constructively at the limits of the permissible, as discussed in Hong Kong scholar Wing Ki Lee’s writing (2021) on ‘disobedient photobooks’.

As well as experiencing different values and moral standards, photographers in various contexts may experience different relationships to history. North American and European students have traditionally been taught a teleological history of the medium, in which early technical experiments and exploration photography led to pictorialism, followed by the documentary and avant-garde branches of modernism, then postmodernism, leading up to a twenty-first century boom in digital activities and post-internet eclecticism. In the UK, at least, this history is gradually being phased out of curricula in favor of more emphasis on contemporary practices. In parts of Southeast Asia only a state-approved history of national photography may be taught – or no national narrative at all in favor of a version of Western photographic history. For photographers emerging in China, and other locations where the history of Western photography became available in a compressed way at the end of the twentieth century, such photographic movements might all be seen as equally remote and/or available, even as unfolding in the present. Photographers in different countries may choose to orient themselves towards fine art rather than photography specifically to embrace the notion of contemporaneity and reject the past (Hacking 2015).

The very word or characters for ‘photography’ with different etymologies, connotations, and denotations in various languages and places. In this volume, we have chosen to use ‘photographies’ to indicate the heterogeneity of photographic practices to be encountered. The term encompasses the plurality of practices that may include artistic forms intended for gallery display alongside photographs made for a variety of other contexts from selfies, family snapshots, and travel photography to photojournalism, fashion, advertising, activism, etc. While our approach to photographs may be inclusive, we generally privilege works that are carefully considered and shaped, with an engagement that may be any combination of aesthetic, conceptual, critical, political, personal, or ethical. These engagements are characteristic of, but not exclusive to, the domain of contemporary art.

A few generalizations can be made about contemporary photographs that apply to the diverse practices described in this volume. Photographers tend to work in series or extended projects, as long-form platforms to explore their ideas. Text, whether in the form of titles, words in the actual image, or associated artist’s statements, may be important components to support the work’s meaning. While contemporary photographers are deeply invested in the visual aspects of their work, most are also engaged with concepts, thematics, narratives, and/or research. Perhaps more controversially, the documentary transparency or objectivity of photography can no longer be taken for granted. This trend may represent a reaction against an outdated model of Western photojournalism, in which a privileged outsider traveled across the world to photograph people and places and speak for them to a Western audience (a practice now largely replaced with the commissioning of local photographers). As Christopher Pinney has written, the penetrative assertions of a Western-influenced ‘transparent’ documentary photography give way to practices which mix representation and an encounter with surface and material (Pinney, 2003). Photographers all over the world may choose to bear witness or convey important personal or social truths using the conventions of documentary photography and the seemingly unmanipulated ‘straight’ photograph, but on the other hand, they may use elements such as staging, fiction, montage, or digital manipulation (Bogre, 2020). We could view this as a turn away from the humanist realism established in Western art and literature in the nineteenth century in favor of more diverse models for exploring human experience (Tormey, 2013). In its place, we find a growing interest in self-representation and in presenting identities in a multiplicity of different modes.

Makers and viewers encounter photographs in a range of material forms, including on the page, wall, and screen. While photographers in Europe and the United States have access to a wealth of digital and analog processes and can make physical prints and exhibition displays at prices that are relatively affordable in relation to incomes, those in much of the Majority World are more likely to work digitally and disseminate their images primarily on screens. Access to digital resources is uneven; the internet may be unreliable, and expensive imaging software may only be accessible in pirated versions. In part as a reaction against the dematerialized quality of on-screen images, photographers internationally are employing an ever-broader range of material forms for their work. With digital publishing becoming more affordable, photobooks – whether modestly or lavishly produced – are an increasingly popular format to experiment with the physical and temporal experience of a photographic project, and to disseminate it. At the same time, photography is taking increasingly ambitious material forms in exhibitions around the world, including three-dimensional installations of prints and screens that may include elements such as sound, moving image, or live performance within structures of wood, glass, or textile. Even the Magnum Foundation, exemplary of the post-WW2 faith in photographic reportage as a factual corrective to war and other political abuses, supports emerging photographers such as Sabiha Çimen from Turkey or Soumya Sankar Bose from India to work in mixed-medium gallery displays and site-specific installations as well as traditional prints. It is ironic that, as the contemporary photography world becomes increasingly interested in sustainability and environmentalism, the staging of exhibitions becomes increasingly elaborate, with bulky, disposable elements. Even the lifecycle of seemingly disembodied digital forms such as NFTs has a considerable environmental impact in terms of computer equipment and energy use (Pratt 2023).

The Globe, Global, Globalization

The term ‘global’ has never been more commonly used, or more fraught. It is worth sifting through some of its various connotations, as several are in play in the current volume as we explore photography and ideas around the world. Firstly, we will highlight the idea of the ‘global’ inclusively as referring to our shared planet and ecosystem, and a desire to reassert the figure of the globe as an alternative to two-dimensional mappings that distort power relationships among nations. A three-dimensional representation of the planet with its land and seas at their correct sizes, the model of the globe offers an alternative to the most common Western projections of the world map which famously distort the proportions of land masses, most frequently to privilege the Northern hemisphere and the countries around the North Atlantic.

As with the drawing of maps, the history and theory of photography have been primarily written in the West, centering on the West. Other points of view are possible and desirable. In an Asian context, for example, a variety of regional framings has become useful to consider as an alternative to the East/West colonial polarity. For example, we might group the nations surrounding the Indian Ocean for consideration, or explore an Africa/Asia axis, or single out particular Asian photographic cultures so that they might be looked at in comparison to each other as Zhuang Wubin does in his book *Photography in Southeast Asia: A Survey* (2016). Our use of the term ‘global’ is first and foremost to support this broader focus, and a desire to redistribute emphasis of study more evenly across the world, rather than merely drawing on top of colonialist maps passed down from previous generations.

The term globalization refers to the network of economic and political interconnections between one country and another, along lines that are in some cases as old as human travel and trade. Since its inception, photography has been both a product and driver of globalization, spreading across the world with colonizers and representing parts of the world to each other, in many cases as a tool of nationalism (Landau and Kaspin, 2002). Photography has played a part in the socioeconomic formation of globalization, sharing both its advantages of development, growth, mobility and ease of communication, and at the same time the inequalities and environmental degradation that have emerged from it (Levin, 2022).

In the 1990s and early 2000s, when the Western ideology of globalism as a positive geopolitical force was at its peak, there was a flurry of art world exhibitions and publications using the term ‘Global Contemporary’. Formulated by curators and scholars such as Hans Belting (2013) and Jonathan Harris (2017) in relation to rapidly proliferating international fairs and biennials, this term implies that, to be truly contemporary, an artist or photographer must make work intended for global platforms and demonstrating an awareness of its global context; it suggests that to be contemporary is to be global and vice versa. Like the term ‘World Music’, derided by many musicians (Byrne 1999), the notion of a global contemporary could imply a kind of mashup of difference, a medley of everywhere, giving disproportionate power to the gatekeepers doing the choosing, and ultimately reinforcing the hegemony of Western cultural production. Globalization is not an art movement or market label; it is a condition in which we are all implicated. For this reason, we avoid using the term ‘global’ let alone ‘global contemporary’ to refer to specific photographers or their practices but continue to use the term in relation to our overlapping interconnectedness.

International photography fairs have tremendous power both to disseminate and to distort the interpretation of photographic projects. The largest of these events, Paris Photo, provides an instructive case study. Held annually in one of the city’s huge pavilions of glass and steel, the fair echoes the international trade expositions that emerged in the mid-nineteenth century in London, New York, Paris, and Vienna to promote Western industrial progress and strengthen the web of international trade (Jones 2016). When it first opened in 1997, Paris Photo served primarily as a showcase for European and American works, by photographers featured in canonical exhibitions and history texts, and by contemporary photographers with formal and institutional relationships to those traditions.

Over the past 25 years the fair has become more globalized in terms of galleries exhibiting and photographers represented. In 2023, out of 154 dealers represented, ten were from Asia, six from South America, with galleries from South Africa, Turkey, and Mexico, as well as various other countries that arguably lie outside the mainstream of contemporary photography markets. Strikingly, the European and North American galleries also included more work from the Majority World than ever before, especially projects focusing on identity. Pockets of activity within the fair allow for extended, meaningful encounters with selected projects; the publishers’ section offers photobooks that might be read from cover to cover, the talks program allows photographers to discuss the making of their work. However, the structure of the main fair, flattening artworks-in-transit from around the world onto the same brightly lit walls, risks reducing them to consumable tokens of the cultures that produced them (Charlesworth 2014).

The other 200-or-so photography fairs and festivals that pepper the globe – demonstrate that more varied photography now circulates, and a larger number of international figures travel with it: photographers, gallerists, curators, scholars, publishers, and critics who may have

experience studying, living, and working in a variety of countries. These figures are important cultural translators who cross the boundaries of nations and languages sharing their knowledge and experience. Cultural capital is being concentrated in a new way; a small number of prominent international figures receive a significant proportion of high-profile exhibitions, prizes, publications, and sales. It is important that we not allow such stimulating concentrations of photographic activity to overshadow the richness of encounters that can happen in more diffuse and dispersed contexts, and that we also turn our attention to the practices and networks that exist or are waiting to emerge outside the spotlight of the global market.

It is not only Western academics or Western art markets that have sought to articulate the relationship between the cultural production of different countries as characteristic of the contemporary. As art historian Reiko Tomii has observed, the origins in 1960s Japan of the terms *gendai bijutsu* and *kokusaiteki dōjisei* – which translate as contemporary art and international contemporaneity – suggest the possibility, before the globalization of Western art in the 1980s–2000s, of a concern for ‘a “shared perception” informed by a given locale’s interface with the outside world’ (Tomii; 2009). Today the term ‘international’, has fallen somewhat out of favor, perhaps due to a sense that 20th century Western entities frequently used it to gloss over the institutional promotion of their own interests. Despite some of the negative associations of the term ‘global’ enumerated above, we use it in this study to convey the kind of transnational audience-facing shared perception Tomii describes.

Questions of Cultural Translation

In speaking of literature, and the experience of readers, Jean-Paul Sartre describes the kind of shorthand that is available to writers addressing an audience in their own context (in his case France in the late 1940s, traumatized by Nazi Occupation):

...people of the same period and community, who have lived through the same events, who have raised or avoided the same questions, have the same taste in their mouth; they have the same complicity, and there are the same corpses among them. That is why it is not necessary to write so much; there are key-words.

(1986, p. 50)

The contributors to this book share a moment in time, a community of dialogue, and, crucially, a commitment to photography as a valuable cultural form. At the same time, each brings intersectional differences, of which nationality is but one. We have discovered that indeed it may be necessary to use many words to understand one another, as photographic images are not always what they seem at first glance, seemingly shared keywords may bear different meanings in various contexts, and our histories may give us separate frames of reference.

We also want to acknowledge the problematics of evoking locality at all in an era characterized by mass migration. As Arjun Appadurai has argued: ‘The many displaced, deterritorialized, and transient populations that constitute today’s ethnoscapings are engaged in the construction of locality, as a structure of feeling, often in the face of erosion, dispersal, and implosion of neighbourhoods as coherent social formations’ (1996, p. 199). Identities are hybrid, and disparate localities may be linked in the lives and experience of individuals and groups. Many of the writers and photographers contained in this volume have multiple languages, dual nationalities, come from diasporic communities, and/or have traveled themselves to live or study – as of course will many of our readers. Stuart Hall describes people

belonging to cultures of hybridity as themselves ‘irrevocably *translated*’, constantly bridging and negotiating languages and identities (Hall 1992, p. 310).

Translators are individuals with multiple fluencies who take responsibility for attempting to bridge gaps in language, knowledge, and understanding – despite the difficulties involved. Translators of photography books can be key interpretive figures in their local scenes. Tehran-based photographer Mohsen Bayramnejad has translated seven English-language photography books and approximately 100 articles into Farsi, describing Western photographic culture as like a puzzle whose big picture can only be understood by gathering enough pieces and drawing them together. Bayramnejad describes his mission as translating photographic ideas into Farsi ‘to build bridges among thinking people in this complicated time for our planet’ (Bayramnejad 2020). His task is made even more complicated by the fact that Iran does not participate in international copyright law, so all his translations are unauthorized. Cultural differences create constant challenges for translators and scholars working across languages. How, for example, is a translator like DongHoon Kim to address the fact that the words ‘document’ and ‘documentary’ would all translate into ‘record’ in Korean, losing the associations that they carry in English (Kim 2023), or a photography doctoral candidate like Yue Li to negotiate the chasm between Eastern and Western understandings of allegory in order to write an English-language thesis about how the tradition of *shan shui* landscape painting persists in contemporary Chinese photography? Close attention to such gaps can turn moments of confusion into opportunities for new understanding.

There are limits to how fully we can understand each other’s distinct worlds. Every generation contributes intellectual tools to undertake the challenge. The relatively recent academic disciplines of translation studies and cultural translation have evolved to meet the need for complex ways to describe and share experience across boundaries of nations and languages (Maitland 2017). To address issues of cultural exchange, they draw on academic disciplines including linguistics, philosophy, cultural studies, social anthropology, and post-colonial studies. Many of the contributions to this book employ such hybrid methods, concerned not only with conveying information, but with framing it in ways that will open new doors for international audiences. Readers of this book are invited to take on the role of cultural translators themselves, bringing their own experience to the table and cross-referencing what they read with what they know.

How to Use This Book

The book and its thematic sections emerged from the Global Photographies Network and its programme of talks, discussions and workshops. Global Photographies was founded in 2020 in response to the global pandemic, the desire for a decolonization of photographic education and discourse, and the collaborative possibilities which arose from working online. The network assembles a partnership of photographic specialists and educators across continents, beginning in Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, the UK, Sweden, Hungary, South Africa, Taiwan and Singapore, who each give their time, knowledge and diverse resources as suits them best, and this has continued into the book in its final form, where sections are structured, commissioned and edited by partners from the network aligned to their research and expertise. The specificities of the positions figured by our editors, further expanded by those of the contributors, shape the book’s contents and produce a polyphonic chorus of topics each addressed from distinct linguistic, geographical and critical starting points, in different styles and with different frames of reference and modes of address.

Introduction

We intend that whatever their experiences and level of study, each reader can encounter a mixture of the familiar and unfamiliar. The book's sections balance historical and academic writing with accounts from practitioners and from individuals who have initiated or catalyzed projects, with a combination of broader survey essays, focused case studies and more conversational interviews and roundtables around spotlighted topics. Despite their heterogeneities, different styles of writing and shifts in emphases, the sections share key characteristics for orienting a reader: each begins with an essay that takes a broad sweep or establishing view, providing tools and contextual perspectives, and each closes with a conversational or summative text which roots the reader as an active participant or possible contributor. A key focus of the book has been its emphasis on global or planetary photographic discourse today, and the book's contents lean towards the possibilities and potentials for photography as it is currently being shaped.

We hope that the book will have practical uses, offering a wealth of recent practices and ideas; a set of role models of photographers and scholars who have built diverse career paths; and a set of case studies that might even function as "how to" lessons for ambitious, pioneering photographic enterprises, including international festivals, online platforms, traveling libraries, magazines and publishing companies. Many of the practices described in the book are overtly political and social, offering productive examples of photographic eco-activism, the formation of radical collectives, the subversive use of existing imagery against the grain of its original production, etc. Readers will also be able to use the book as a traditional textbook, to learn about a range of contemporary practices, both established and emerging, and about the relevant areas of contemporary cultural theory with which they intersect. The book sets out to foreground a truly broad range of perspectives to be found in different parts of the world. It represents a project and approach that is ongoing, to widen horizons and modify the histories of photography that we tell.

In Part One, *Photography in the Anthropocene: Climate Change and Environment*, editors Svea Josephy and Jean Brundrit lead a discussion of photography and the environment from the perspective of the Southern Hemisphere. To address the man-made issues associated with the Anthropocene—including rapid climate change, the possibility of mass extinction, environmental apocalypse, water scarcity, reduction of habitat, the dumping of trash, and unfair distribution of resources—Brundrit and Josephy imagined a set of dialogues "talking back" to empire through photography. At stake is the notion that The South is not a reflection of the North or a mirror of the center but has its own concerns, problems, and contexts. Several of the contributions argue that the issues we face collectively in the Anthropocene are a legacy of colonialism's history of extraction—particularly in Africa. The section includes several examples of co-writing in which people bring different skills, in which the artist is not a subject but a co-author, and in which art historians and theorists write with scientists.

Part Two, *Decolonial Practices: Speaking Back to the Canon*, edited by Nina Mangalanayagam and Emese Mucsi, reflects the variety and complexity of postcolonial legacies, with a set of contributions that frame photography's potential to be used within decolonial practices in contexts as diverse as South Asia, Greenland, Hungary, West Africa and Peru. Starting with a recognition that Europe itself has a series of distinct local, colonial and decolonial contexts, conversations with theorists bring key terminology and concepts into focus around particular projects. Case studies unpack the ways contemporary photographic projects speak back to colonial pasts through processes including the strategic reframing of archival materials, engagement with indigenous practices, and the construction of auto-narratives.

Part Three, *Gender and Queer Theory in Photography Today: Identities and Histories*, explores ways that gender, as a socio-cultural construction, operates as a system of representation that both carries and assigns meanings to individuals. Editor Alejandra Niedermaier has gathered contributors who are attentive to the ways that the revolution of thought brought by feminism has intersected with postmodernism, queer theory and postcolonial theory. Radiating outwards from Argentina and South America, the section explores how photography as a form of aesthetic production, especially as seen through a feminist perspective, can be an instrument to reflect on gendered experience, and to challenge and test conditions of visibility, representation, self-representation and new forms of experience. The chapters give account of leading and emerging female, non-binary and LGBTQ+ photographers and their visual journeys, as well as exploring feminist approaches to the past through research and the process of curation. The lens of identity – in this case focused on gender and sexuality – allows new insights and new forms of experience to be articulated that may be political, dissident, liberatory, performative, and empowering.

Part Four, *New Materialities: Expanded Practices in Contemporary Art and Photography*, edited by Duncan Wooldridge and Rashi Rajguru, tracks how mineral and material concerns in recent critical thinking are reflected in new forms and observations around the photographic image. Beginning with Europe's gradual recognition of the material effects of extractive capitalism and labor, colliding with material encounters and practices in Africa, the Middle East, and South East and Central Asia, the section reveals how both subtle and emphatic materialities provide not only critiques of digital culture, but find in haptic and physical practices forms of access to often-displaced encounters, sensitivities and agencies. The section explores how photography might, in its open-ended and expanded field of practices, develop highly specific experiences and the beginnings of planetary and ecological thinking.

The contributions in Part Five, *Forming Communities: Networks, Platforms and Institutions*, edited by Camilo Páez Vanegas, explore the development of photographic groups and networks, collaborative and participatory modes and activities. From a survey of Southeast Asian photographic communities and a roundtable of alternative educational platforms in Latin America to discrete case studies in Colombia, Ireland and Central and Southern Africa, the contributions examine how collaborative and communitarian activities emerge in dialogue with their contexts, to build new infrastructures and ecologies. With a focus on project initiation and structuring, the section emphasizes methodologies and the steps taken in the development of supportive ecologies: how can we build an organization or network? How are we to negotiate state political infrastructures and economic structures? How might we begin to conceptualize projects in relation to national, regional, and international frameworks, keeping plugged into local contexts whilst developing international support networks?

In Part Six, *From Production to Distribution: Global Approaches to Photobooks*, editors Yinhua Chu and Zhuang Wubin provide an overview of contemporary photobook practices, with an emphasis on publishing in Southeast Asia, Hong Kong, The People's Republic of China, South Korea, Japan and Latin America, drawing upon perspectives offered by significant practitioners operating in the field. The section examines the wide variety of different photobook cultures, from the handmade to the technologically advanced, in which audience, encounter and the book's capacity and restrictions to travel are continuously negotiated. Through advances in the availability of digital technology the photobook takes prominence as a portable form ideally suited for global distribution through new networks. With critical overviews, accounts from publishers, and a roundtable discussing photobook

collecting, displays and activist practices, the section highlights a wealth of recent activities in this area and emphasizes new possibilities for publishing and audiences to come.

As would be expected in a book this large that aims for a cross-section of the global photography ecosystem, there are various overlaps between the sections, and several of the contributions might have appeared in a different part in the book. Numerous topics that could have been included as section themes were not, but appear in the book in various forms, including race, the intersection of photography with new technologies, the politics of representation and censorship, photographic education, questions around futurity, etc. Readers may choose to read a single chapter, according to the subject matter or author. They might prefer to read one of the sections in its entirety—each could be considered as a freestanding volume providing a well-rounded set of perspectives on its theme. Some may read the book in its entirety. Above all, we want the *Companion* to open spaces of possibility, in which readers wherever they are may learn more about contemporary photography and imagine new ways to make and share their work and to connect with others. We hope that it will have ripple effects that exceed what we can imagine in the present.

The *Companion's* selection of authors, case studies and themes does not pretend to be complete or representative of the full range of contemporary photography and scholarship but is offered as a productive starting point. We are telling parts of a story that could—and we hope will in the future—be told in many other ways. The book provides a cross-section of contemporary practices and approaches. It also offers a model for how we might continue to work together to develop shared understandings. We are not interested in creating a homogenous global photography culture, but rather in deepening conversation around shared concerns, foregrounding diverse approaches, providing a platform for underrepresented voices and opening new debates. We hope that this volume will provide new photographic encounters and insights for readers wherever they may be.

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