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What does home mean to us today? In: Visualising the home, 13-14 July 2017,
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Visualising the Home CFP

A conference exploring the meaning of home within contemporary society as seen through photography – 13th-14th July 2017

University of Cumbria Institute of the Arts

Confirmed speakers:

Clare Gallagher, Photographer and Course Director of BA (Hons) Photography, University of Belfast School of Art

Katrin Joost, Philosopher and Programme Leader of MA Photography, University of Cumbria Institute of the Arts



What does home mean to us today?

How can we depict the intimacy of homes as personal and private spaces as well as expressing the public and political dimensions of home? How does photography shape our visual understanding of our home?

We all know our homes; yet, home is one of the most elusive of concepts. There are many people who have no homes and it can certainly be considered a privilege (and conversely a burden) to be a homeowner. Houses that are dwellings are more than mere bricks and mortar. Home as a sense of belonging is familiar to everyone, yet so difficult to describe. Images of houses and domestic spaces often serve as symbols, but rarely convey the intimate and individual sensibility of home.

How then are we to articulate and visualise the aesthetics of home? The homely cosiness of the familiar has become idealised and easily recognised within collective consciousness to the extent that it has become a major marketing tool. The connotations and visual clues of home are universal and particular, personal and corporate. In a broader sense, how does photography operate in the aesthetics of home?

Photographs of loved ones; family occasions, and places familiar to us constitute a major component of the aesthetics of home. Yet, we often only recognise our home once we leave or lose it. Hence, the innumerable melancholy songs about lost homes and memories of hometowns. The pain of homesickness and the anguish of exile expose the importance of home to us.

More than the personal sensibility of home as private and domestic space, home can also be seen on a larger, public scale. Here, home gains a political dimension. National, ethnic and cultural senses of belonging and ownership relate to land, government and language. What does homeland mean? Does it belong to us to be shaped by us or do we belong to it to be shaped by it. The current refugee crisis

brings to our consciousness the fundamental questions of home, politically and individually. More so, maybe, the Brexit referendum shows the passions of belonging and ownership and how governance is grounded in a sensibility of home.

Home is an emotive concept; there are myriad dimensions to reflect on. Below are a number of conceptualisations (which is by no means conclusive) to consider.

- Where is home? Space, place, houses?
- What is home? Language, people, space?
- When is home? Memory, childhood, formative years or building a future?
- What does home look like? Visibility, demonstrability, aesthetics?

Domestic space

- Retreat, safe space
- Personal space, privacy & intimacy
- Female realm, homemaking
- Habits and habitats
- Familiar, ordinary and mundane

Ownership of home

- Belonging – place, class, culture etc.
- Family history, heritage
- Domestic pride
- Defence of home

Imagination of home

- Sentimentality and idealisation of home as a purely positive place
- Nostalgia, yearning for a time that never was
- Memory and memento of home

Absence, loss and denial of home

- Refugees, exile
- Invasion of home
- Political oppression
- Homelessness and poverty
- Homesickness - *Heimweh*

Negative home

- Trapped in the home (domestic limitations and pressures or emigrate forbade??)
- Imposed home (imprisonment, house arrest)
- Domestic violence
- Wanderlust - *Fernweh*

Aesthetics of home

- Pictures of homeliness, cosiness and longing
- Discrepancies of comfort and/or belonging
- Photographs within the home
- Pressures of aesthetics and consumerism of home as opposed to the individual personal space

Structural / essential aspects of home

- Only apparent when absent (invisible when one has never left home)
- Fractured reality of home: comforts of home as well as boredom / conflict etc. of home
- Home as origin
- Story of home (becoming and ceasing to be)
- Home as a space to just be (not for others, not performing – or performing to the ideal of home)

Philosophical

- Husserl on *Lebenswelt* - home world, alien world, lifeworld (Held)
- Heidegger on dwelling, pathmaking etc.
- Arendt on human activity in view of the distinction between the private and public realm
- Freud on *heimlich* (homely) & *unheimlich* (uncanny)
- Foucault on spaces and power
- Bachelard on the lived experience of space

SUBMISSION DETAILS:

Paper proposals are invited for 20min presentations. Please submit a 300w abstract submitted as a word document, up to 3 low-resolution images and a 150w biographical note to **both** organising chairs Katrin Joost (katrin.joost@cumbria.ac.uk) and Sarah Bonner (sarah.bonner@cumbria.ac.uk) by **28th February 2017**. The peer-reviewed selection will be concluded and authors notified by the 31st March 2017.

A full draft (up to 3000w) of the presentation paper will be required in advance of the conference by 12th June 2017 to ensure participation in the event and any publication opportunities after the event.

We would expect full participation in the event by delegates and encourage speakers to have confidence to present their papers without relying on reading their presentation. In the same way we would encourage digital presentations of images only (captions excepted). In this manner we hope to encourage a collegiate sharing of ideas and welcome discussion in all areas of the conference theme.

For further information please contact Katrin Joost (katrin.joost@cumbria.ac.uk) or Sarah Bonner (sarah.bonner@cumbria.ac.uk)