



Thinking Photography: New Strands in Photo Research

Doctoral Workshop

16th – 20th March 2026

Brera Academy of Fine Arts, Milan

What does it mean to think about photography today? This question frames *Thinking Photography: New Strands in Photo Research*, a five-day doctoral workshop that will take place at the Brera Academy of Fine Arts, Milan, from 16 to 20 March 2026. The workshop brings together three international visiting scholars—**Martin Jürgens** (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), **Steffen Siegel** (Folkwang University of the Arts, Essen), and **Kelley Wilder** (De Montfort University, Leicester)—for an intensive programme of seminars, discussions, and collaborative working sessions.

Coordinated by Nicoletta Leonardi and Maria Chiara Palandri and conceived as a collective laboratory, *Thinking Photography* reflects on the methodological transformations currently reshaping photographic studies.

Across five days, the programme develops four interconnected research strands:

Business and economic histories of photography. Drawing on industrial archives and business records, this strand explores photography as a technological and commercial enterprise, addressing the infrastructures, labour, and economies that have shaped photographic production and circulation.

Quantity and Significance in Photographic History. Using the case of etched daguerreotypes, this strand investigates how databases, statistical analysis, and the notion of “critical mass” can inform historical interpretation, raising questions about the relationship between quantity, use, value, and historical significance.

Personal and family photographs as sources for writing photographic history. Focusing on private collections, the strand reflects on the methodological and ethical challenges of constructing historical narratives from family archives, considering both the possibilities and the pitfalls of working with intimate, personal materials.

Photobooks as sites where aesthetics, politics, and social functions converge. Moving beyond national or stylistic canons, this strand focuses on photobooks’ social uses, examining how photographs acquire meaning within

editorial, institutional, and ideological frameworks. It rereads questions of aesthetics and politics from a perspective reframed and enriched by social function.

Through these perspectives, the workshop addresses photography as an intermedial and institutional phenomenon, whose histories are produced at the intersection of images, objects, technologies, archives, markets, and social practices. The aim is not only to present new case studies, but also to reflect critically on the epistemological frameworks through which photographic history is written today.

Thinking Photography includes visits to the collections of the Leonardo da Vinci National Museum of Science and Technology, the Civico Archivio Fotografico, and the Brera Academy of Fine Arts.

Open to doctoral students of the Brera Academy, and to a limited number of external participants upon request, *Thinking Photography* is conceived as a moment of international and interdisciplinary exchange.

The initiative is part of the PNRR project *INTAFAM IartNET – an international platform for artistic research and cultural heritage at Italian higher arts education institutions*, led by the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera and coordinated by Nicoletta Leonardi, with funding from the European Union – NextGenerationEU, Mission 4.

Bios

Martin Jürgens is conservator of photographs at the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam. Before moving to the Netherlands, he worked as a conservator in private practice in Hamburg. His education includes a German diploma in photography and design, an M.S. from Rochester Institute of Technology and an M.A. in Paper Conservation from Queen's University in Kingston, Canada. Following a scholarship at the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Getty Conservation Institute published his book *The Digital Print. Identification and Preservation* in 2009. He is currently a part-time PhD student at the Photographic History Research Centre of De Montfort University in Leicester, UK.

Steffen Siegel has taught as professor of theory and history of photography at the Folkwang University of the Arts in Essen since 2015, where he also directs the master's and PhD programs on the theory and history of photography. Since 2024, he has served as Chair of the Board of the Center for Photography Essen. During the 2019/2020 academic year, he was an Ailsa Mellon Bruce Senior Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. In the fall semester of 2024, he taught as Max Kade Professor at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. His most recent publications include *Fotogeschichte aus dem Geist des Fotobuchs* (Wallstein Verlag, 2019), *1839: Daguerre, Talbot et la publication de la photographie* (Paris: Éditions Macula, 2020), and *Improvised Projections* (Distanz Verlag, 2025; with Philipp Goldbach). As co-editor, he has also published *Wolfgang Schulz und die Fotoszene um 1980* (Spector Books, 2019), *Circulating Photographs* (History of Photography 45/2021), *Über Fotografie schreiben II* (Fotogeschichte 42/2022), *Vermessene Bilder: Von der Fotogrammetrie zur Bildforensik* (Fotogeschichte 44/2024), and *Archival Absences: Towards an Incomplete History of Photography* (Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte 88/2025).

Kelley Wilder Professor Emerita and former Director, Photographic History Research Centre at De Montfort University, Kelley gained a BA from Kenyon College in 1993 in

Studio Art and English Literature, and in 1995 graduated from the George Eastman House with a Certificate in Photographic Preservation and Archives Practice. Before beginning her doctorate, Kelley worked at the Paul Strand Archive (NY), the Maine Photographic Workshops, the Aultman Museum (CO) and Photo-Eye Books and Prints (NM) while learning platinum printing, albumen printing and daguerreotyping. In 2003, she gained a D.Phil. from Oxford University with a dissertation on the invention of photography and went on to a fellowship at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin, working with Director Lorraine Daston. Kelley Wilder's research ranges over the breadth of photography, science, materials, archives and knowledge, with numerous articles and books to her name. Recent publications include, 'Calotype Knowledge, Calotype Practice: Photographing Sculpture and the Reading Establishment' *Kunst Chronik* 78:7 (2025) and 'Photography: Between Discipline and Indiscipline' in G. Johnson (ed), *Art History Now: Objects, Concepts, Approaches* (2025). Forthcoming in the next issue of *Transbordeur* is 'On the Value of a Photographic Company' (2026) and an edited special issue of the *PhotoResearcher*, 'Photography and Electricity' (2026).

Participants

Flavia Berizzi, Gloria Boero, Eleonora Corvi, Marco Fagiolo, Paola Fagnola, Rebecca Garavaglia, Gaia Costanza Grassi, Elisa Rocca, Mariia Shevchenko

PROGRAMME | Thinking Photography: New Strands in Photo Research

Doctoral Workshop | 16–20 March 2026

Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera, Via Brera 28, Milano

Monday, 16 March 2026

4:00 - 6:30 PM

Istituto Lombardo Accademia di Scienze e Lettere, Sala Adunanze

Via Brera 28, Milano

Introductory meeting and participants' presentations

Flavia Berizzi, Brera Academy of Fine Arts, *Plaster cast makers and innovations in moulding techniques in Lombardy area between mid-19th and early 20th century*

Gloria Boero, Brera Academy of Fine Arts, *Late 19th-early 20th Century paper types and uses at Brera Academy of Fine Arts*

Eleonora Corvi, Brera Academy of Fine Arts, *The tradition of fable imagery in sculptural decoration in Northern Italy between the 11th and the 13th centuries*

Marco Fagiolo, Brera Academy of Fine Arts, *The composites islamic manuscripts. Study of the use of mixed parchment and paper gatherings between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries for the manufacture of Middle Eastern and Islamic codex*

Paola Fagnola, Brera Academy of Fine Arts, *Technical history of Italian bookbinding in the industrial era*

Rebecca Garavaglia, Brera Academy of Fine Arts, *The medieval altar in Northern Italy and the case study of the masonry painted altar*

Gaia Costanza Grassi, Brera Academy of Fine Arts, *Between Cremona and Europe: The case of the Soresina Vidoni Collection*

Elisa Rocca, Brera Academy of Fine Arts, *The Visconti castles and their restorations: a picture of the Middle Ages*

Mariia Shevchenko, IMT School of Advanced Studies Lucca, *The reception of US photography exhibitions in Italian photographic culture (1967-1979)*

Gloria Boero, Paola Fagnola and Elisa Rocca, *Matter and materiality of the Bel Paese: photographic albums as visual sources and material objects*

Tuesday, 17 March 2026

9:30 – 12:30 AM

Istituto Lombardo Accademia di Scienze e Lettere, Sala Adunanze
Via Brera 28, Milano

Kelley Wilder, *Business Histories of Photography*

2:00 – 5:00 PM

Visit to the **Brera Academy of Fine Arts** historical photographic holdings with **Nicoletta Leonardi**, Professor of Photo history and Curator of Photographs | **Maria Chiara Palandri**, Professor of Paper conservation and Head of the Paper Conservation Programme

Wednesday, 18 March 2026

10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Visit to the Photographic Archives of the **Museo Nazionale Scienza e Tecnologia Leonardo da Vinci** with **Simona Casonato**, Collections Media, ICT and Digital Culture Curator, **Paola Redemagni**, Historical Archives Coordinator, and **Paola Mazzucchi**, Library Coordinator | Via San Vittore 21, Milano

3:00 – 6:00 PM

Istituto Lombardo Accademia di Scienze e Lettere, Sala Adunanze
Via Brera 28, Milano

Martin Jürgens, *Quantity and Significance in Photographic History*

Thursday, 19 March 2026

10:00 AM – 1:00 PM Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera, Room 21a

Kelley Wilder, *Personal Collections as Sources for Writing Photographic History*

Friday, 20 March 2026

9:30 AM – 12:30 AM

Visit to the **Civico Archivio Fotografico** with **Silvia Paoli**, Chief Curator of the Photographic Archive, Castello Sforzesco | Piazza Castello 2, Milano

2:00 – 5:00 PM

Istituto Lombardo Accademia di Scienze e Lettere, Sala Adunanze
Via Brera 28, Milano

Steffen Siegel, *War Primer, Druzhba Pipeline, Moon Atlas: On Photobooks and East German History*

Information

iartnet.ricerca@fadbrera.edu.it