MIGRATION + COLLECTIVE MEMORY

doc! photo magazine #46 is dedicated to two themes: ***Migration*** and ***Collective Memory.*** Although they are presented separately, one can find here projects that discuss both topics simultaneously. Then they show how migration and collective memory interfere each other, because our memory is based on experience and this experience also/often includes migration. We are all migrants or at least come from a family with a history of migration.

Featured projects:

- ***Tehran Diary*** by **Parisa Aminolahi** (text by **Haleh Anvari**)
- ***Let Me In*** by **Jean-Marc Caimi** & **Valentina Piccinni**
- ***Over the Line*** by **Juan González Fornes**
- ***The Event in Focus Is (Not) Over*** by **Délio Jasse** (text by **Dr. Mark Sealy, MBE**)
- ***This Creaking Floor and All the Ceilings Below*** by **Bart Lunenburg**
- ***Bled Runner*** by **Camille Millerand**
- ***Project Iceworm*** by **Anastasia Mityukova** (text by **Cat Lachowskyj**)
- ***Jigsaw*** by **Yu Yu Myint Than**
- ***The Precarious Archive - Act 1: The Truman Monument (1947, 1963)*** by **Stefanos Tsivopoulos**

Interviews and essays:

- ***We the Migrants*** - **Anna Akage** in conversation with **Anna Fiń** (illustrated with photographs by **Dinu Li** and **Zula Rabikowska**)
- ***The Precarious Archive*** - **Natasha Christia** and **Daria Tuminas** in conversation with **Stefanos Tsivopoulos**
- ***Above the Fold: From Columbine to COVID*** - **Marianne Hirsch** in conversation with **Lorie Novak**
- **Yan Morvan - à propos Bobby Sands** - essay by **Georges Vercheval**

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DOC! WHEN THE STORY MATTERS

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Cover photo: Home. Drawing by an 8 years old Syrian boy travelling with his family to Germany. Taken from the project *Let Me In* by Jean-Marc Caimi & Valentina Piccinni

Lorem Ipsum

A conversation between Marianne Hirsch and Lorie Novak

Above the Fold: From Columbine to COVID

Lorie Novak: In March 1999, struck by the preponderance of images of refugees fleeing Kosovo on the front page of *The New York Times* delivered to my door each day, I began saving the front section when NATO began bombing Serbian military positions there. *The New York Times* is not only my city newspaper, its journalism is read in the entire United States and across the globe. What images they place on the front page, above the fold, has implications far beyond the local. One month after I began collecting, two teens went on a shooting spree at Columbine High School in the state of Colorado on April 20, 1999, killing 13 people and wounding more than 20 others. The World Trade Centre was attacked. I kept collecting. I have not stopped. What started out as my attempt to visualise a war evolved into *Above the Fold*, a multi-faceted project that is a concrete manifestation of contemporary trends and biases of U.S. media and culture of the early 21st century.[1]

Now, in my studio, there are over 7,500 front-page sections of *The New York Times* sorted by the subject of the photograph that appears above the fold and then placed into 33 stacks of papers of varying heights. In analysing and looking at the front-page images over the years, I saw history repeating itself in recurring image tropes. I realised that I could classify the papers according to the subject matter of the photograph above the fold to create a visual and material representation of our times and hopefully inform resistance and social change. Needless to say, this is my own categorisation, and I created a hierarchy of my categories to determine which piles I would place the day's paper into when the front-page image falls within multiple categories. As most archives these days are digital, this has felt like an old-fashioned dilemma.

Men & A Few Women with Guns was the biggest pile until Donald Trump got elected in 2016. Now *U.S. Presidents* is the tallest. *Sexual Assault & Harassment* is the smallest, and there were not even enough papers to make it a pile until 2018. In 2019, photos of Trump and images concerning the impeachment hearings appeared most often, followed by images of natural disasters and extreme weather. As of this writing on May 12, 2020, images concerning the COVID-19 pandemic have been above the fold every day since March 8, and most likely will continue for the foreseeable future. It is hard to say now if I will distribute these papers among the existing categories of *Dead Bodies, Science, Health & Medicine, Business*, etc., or create a new *COVID-19* category. Another option may be to create a new category for *Pandemics* and find the papers which featured photographs about Ebola, SARS, HIV/AIDS, and other viruses. The 75 COVID-19-focused front page images so far this year provide a glimpse into how this pandemic is and is not being visualised: 20 depict effects of restrictions on everyday lives and empty city scenes, 9 graphs count case numbers and deaths, 9 images focus on the economy, 9 photos are hospital scenes, 5 are about testing, 5 show memorials, 4 are of dead bodies, 4 are about masks and medical supplies, 3 are about schools, 3 are about poverty, 3 are about cruise ships, and 1 is an X-ray of coronavirus lungs. While in-depth stories by photojournalists are beginning to appear online, as well as a host of images in an array of online sources, offering a fuller picture of the toll the virus is taking, my fascination is with the choice that must be made daily by the NYT for that single prominent image of the day.

[1] For more information about the *Above the Fold* project go to https://www.lorienovak.com/projects/above-the-fold.

(*left*) *Refugees & Migrants Above the Fold*, 1999–2019
20 years of photographs of refugees and migrants above the fold on the front page of *The New York Times* from the start of NATO's bombing of Serbia in the Kosovo War in March 1999 to March 2019.

(*right*) *Men & A Few Women with Guns Above the Fold*, 2019
Photographs of people with guns on the front page of *The New York Times* during the presidencies of G.W. Bush, Barack Obama, and the first 2 years of Donald Trump.

Sexual Harassment & Assault

U.S. Domestic Terrorism & Shootings

Dead Bodies

Natural Disasters

(*left*) *Sexual Harassment & Assault Above the Fold*, 2019
Photographs concerning sexual harassment and assault on the front page of *The New York Times* during the presidencies of G.W. Bush, Barack Obama, and the first 2 years of Donald Trump.

(*right*) *U.S. Domestic Terrorism & Shootings Above the Fold*, 2019
Photographs of domestic terrorism and shootings in the United States on the front page of *The New York Times* during the presidencies of G.W. Bush, Barack Obama, and the first 2 years of Donald Trump.

(*left*) *Dead Bodies Above the Fold*, 2019
Photographs of dead bodies on the front page of *The New York Times* during the presidencies of G.W. Bush, Barack Obama, and the first 2 years of Donald Trump.

(*right*) *Natural Disasters Above the Fold*, 2019
Photographs of natural disasters on the front page of *The New York Times* during the presidencies of G.W. Bush, Barack Obama, and the first 2 years of Donald Trump.

Stills from the video *From Columbine to Parkland*, 2019. 20 years of School Photos above the fold on the front page of *The New York Times*. 11.5 minutes silent video loop.

Marianne Hirsch: Schools were not a category in your classification of the above the fold photographs. When schools have made front page news in the United States since you began collecting, it has often been due to school shootings. In fact, you began your collection shortly after the massacre at Columbine. When Leo Spitzer and I envisioned our exhibition on *School Photos and Their Afterlives* at the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College, we searched for a work that would address this particular social crisis, one that affects students and teachers across the country.[2] We were therefore very grateful that you agreed to make the video *From Columbine to Parkland*.[3]

School Photos and Their Afterlives, still up at the museum but closed to the public due to the Coronavirus, presents archival class photographs from diverse communities across the globe in critical dialogue with works by contemporary artists who reframe and comment on them. Ranging across photography's histories, the exhibition shows how school pictures perform important social and ideological functions. Reflecting on the afterlives of school photos taken in times of transformation and of social and political crisis, the exhibition exposes the powerful and often problematic role of vernacular photographs and photographic archives, their affective resonances, and the imaginative ways that artists around the world make these visible. Although many of the front-page photos are not class pictures in the traditional sense, your video makes school shootings, and their media representations, visible in complex ways.

LN: For the video created for your exhibition, I looked through the 20 years of front pages, stretching from the Columbine shootings to the aftermath of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shootings in Parkland, Florida, in 2018. I identified photographs above the fold that focused on schools and education, and the images cut across a number of the categories I had devised, such as *U.S. Domestic Terrorism & Shootings*, *Memorials*, *Life in Conflict Zones*, *Human Interest*, and *U.S. Protest*. To give a sense of the 98 photos I found about schools, 23 focused on school shootings, 6 are of memorials which are a result of the shootings, 27 focused on human interest and graduation stories, 22 depict children in schools in global conflict zones, 6 are about failing U.S. schools, 6 are about immigrant life in the U.S., and 8 are about protests. Considering the number of youths protesting against gun violence and climate change in recent years, I was surprised at the relatively small number of protest images. I should not have been because *U.S. Protest* is an underrepresented category of images on the front page of *The New York Times*.

I see myself as both image maker and consumer. In this video, as in other works, I incorporate my gaze into images as an intervention to disrupt our perceptions and to interfere with our ways of understanding the world through the image. I want to draw attention to the act of looking at traumatic images and connect the personal with the political. I ask viewers to look with me, at me, and through me.

MH: Your blinking eyes in the video do, as you say, invite us to look with and through you but, in the gallery, they do more. School photos are institutional images, taken by a state-certified institution to advance the ideologies that bind individuals into its collective. School photos thus create national subjects, but they also create 'others'—they foster both assimilation and exclusion, belonging and unbelonging. The exhibit displays photos of schools and classes in times of crisis, for example, images taken in the Nazi ghettos in Europe, in boarding schools for indigenous children in North America and elsewhere, in Japanese-American concentration camps during World War II, and in racially segregated and integrated schools in European and American imperial settings.

In the gallery, the eyes in your video address the visitor contemplating so many images of injustice. They provoke us not just to look, but to act. To bond with the subjects of the images, the children, rather than seeing through the lens of the institution. It is as though your glasses add two additional lenses to the image, lenses that disrupt the gaze of the photographer and the words of the journalist above the fold. Now, during the quarantine, with schools closed and only slowly reopening, and school rituals that are often the subject of photography like sporting events or graduations cancelled, school photos take on a different meaning. In ordinary circumstances, we might resist the coerced form of belonging that school photos promote. But in moments of crisis, such as the one in which we find ourselves in a global pandemic, the togetherness of school, made tangible and real in a group photo, appears all the more precious. What is 'school' when collectivity—with all its positives and negatives—is suddenly eviscerated everywhere by the threat of infection? Children are at home, alone, staring at a screen. They meet on zoom, each in their own square. In fact, the grid you made with the video stills mimics the squares in which, as teachers and students, we now meet each other. In Europe and Asia, students are slowly beginning to go to classrooms where desks are placed at a distance. These images show isolation.

School's Out, May 2020, combines two images. On the outside, the front-page photo from May 11, 2020—empty hallways with open doors in a German high school. No people there to contaminate the freshly cleaned linoleum. Nothing to see. But inside your glasses, there is another image from May 5, 2020 of children in Japan whose parents were unable to stay home with them. These children sit far from each other, heads down. You are doubly framing this new normal for us. Through you, with you, we are becoming witnesses to a transformation of what school means, and what it does. And yet, the text below underscores what has always been—school as 'relief' and 'risk', 'bias' that 'haunts', 'mourning' injustice.

School's Out, May 2020, 2020

[2] *School Photos and Their Afterlives* (curated by Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer) @ the Dartmouth College Hood Museum of Art, Hanover, NH, USA, January 8 – April 12, 2020.

[3] To see the full version of the video *From Columbine to Parkland* go to https://vimeo.com/376374663.

Lives Lost on 2 Cruel Days, 2020

LN: During our current COVID-19 pandemic, I, like many artists, am asking myself how to make meaningful work that reflects on the unfathomable number of deaths, increased poverty, and racism. For many years, I have thought about the experience of looking at photographs as a disruptive encounter. I call this photographic interference.[4] Such a disruption can occur while glancing at the front page of a newspaper or coming upon an old family photograph when looking through my computer. Images of atrocity and suffering themselves disrupt our daily lives. It is hard to look and hard to look away. As an artist I cannot ignore these images. I feel as if they get under my skin.

Just as I wonder what our national response would have been if images about sexual assault appeared on the front page as often as photographs glorifying men with guns, I am thinking about what is missing from the COVID-19 coverage both in print and online. Very few images really address the death toll or how people are grieving. I see the composites I am making now not only as a reflection on what we are seeing, but also as a way for me to grieve. The April 20 front page photo by Andrew Seng of a women holding a photo of her husband who died of COVID-19 was one of those that got under my skin. In *Lives Lost on 2 Cruel Days*, the snapshot she holds becomes my teardrop.

MH: You are not wearing your glasses in *Lives Lost on 2 Cruel Days* and thus you are creating a more immediate connection with us as viewers. The glasses frame, or perhaps reframe, our field of vision. Here the Seng image which, as you say, is a teardrop, is also another frame, a frame within multiple frames. Was the choice not to wear glasses here deliberate?

LN: Very deliberate. First, I must determine if using a self-portrait in which I am wearing my glasses will obscure crucial parts of the composite image. The more important consideration, however, is a conceptual one. In addition to the re-framing that glasses suggest, I also think about how they imply 'reading' an image and bringing things into sharp focus. That kind of reading also creates a critical distance. Without glasses, the overlay images, for me, become more like tattoos or scars.

MH: Indeed, the intercalated image is grafted onto your skin. As we look at you and with you, we share that grafting. We look at your eye through it, and, with you, we also look out at this world through it. We share your vulnerability. Vision is inflected by touch – I see so many hands here. The hand tenderly holding the photo of the couple. And the white gloved hands holding the paper. Are these archival gloves, or are they gloves that will protect you from infection? If your hands are protected, your face is exposed, marked. And you are inviting us, affectively, into your unframed field of vision and touch to hold the paper with you, and to share the weight of the story it tells.

[4] Laura Wexler, 'Instilling Interference: Lorie Novak's Frequencies in Traumatic Time', in Ayse Gul Altinay, Maria José Contreras, Marianne Hirsch, Jean Howard, Banu Karaca, and Alisa Solomon (eds) *Women Mobilizing Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), Chapter XIII.

Lorie Novak (1954, born in Los Angeles, CA and based in New York City, NY, USA) | an artist and Professor of Photography & Imaging at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and Associate Faculty at the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics, and founding director of Tisch Future Imagemakers, a free high school photography programme | her photographs, installations, and web projects explore memory and transmission, the relationship between the intimate and the public, and the shifting cultural meanings of photographs | her collaborative web project collectedvisions.net (since 1996), exploring how family photographs shape our memory, was one of the earliest interactive storytelling sites | her work has been shown internationally at numerous solo and group exhibitions, and her photographs are in many permanent museum collections.

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Marianne Hirsch (1949, born in Timișoara, Romania and based in New York City, NY, USA) | William Peterfield Trent Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University and Professor in the Institute for Research on Women, Gender, and Sexuality | a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences | a former President of the Modern Language Association of America | educated at Brown University, where she received her BA/MA and PhD | writes about literature and photography | her work combines feminist theory with memory studies, particularly the transmission of memories of violence across generations | author, among many other books, of *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012) and co-author with Leo Spitzer of *School Photos in Liquid Time: Reframing Difference* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2020).