filter

PRESS RELEASE

FILTER #8: Photography Post-Truth

The latest issue of the photo journal *Filter for fotografi* focuses on the role of photography in an age characterised by fake news, AI-generated photorealistic images, declining trust in authorities and established news media, and the increasing use of photography as a propaganda tool in wars and conflicts.

FILTER #8: Photography Post-Truth explores how the photographic medium both communicates and shapes our understanding of reality, and how photographs – whether intentionally or unconsciously – have been used to manipulate the masses and spread a particular worldview. In doing so, they have influenced history, science and the lives and beliefs of individuals.

Photo historian Rolf Sachsse reveals how the Nazis used photography as a propaganda tool, and how their image politics made large segments of the German population turn a blind eye to the horrors around them. In an interview with media artist Boris Eldagsen, who became world famous in 2023 when he won (but refused to accept) the *Sony World Photography Award* for an image created using artificial intelligence, he talks about his transition from working as a photographer to creating art with AI-image generators, and reflects on the fundamental differences between the two media. As a member of the German Photo Council's expert group on technological progress, he comments on the significance of the spread of photorealistic AI-generated images for the future of photography and our view of the medium. Related to this, Senior Lecturer in Photojournalism and Documentary Photography at the University of the Arts London, Lewis Bush, examines the causes of the growing distrust of authorities in general – and journalists and photojournalists in particular – and presents strategies that the media can use to regain and strengthen the credibility of photography at a time when the authenticity of images is increasingly uncertain. Artist and PhD researcher at the Hasselblad Foundation, Kerstin Hamilton, explores how scientific photographs and technology shape our understanding of the world and emphasises the need for critical reflection on how images convey the complexity of the world, while PhD-candidate Oscar Vindel Schönström gives an account of how documentary and art photography have developed from the mid-1990s to the present day.

‘AI IS NOT PHOTOGRA-PHY.’

In March 2023, German photographer, video- and media-artist Boris Eldagsen made headlines around the world when he refused to accept the prestigious Sony World Photo Award for his image *Pseudomnesia: The Electrician*, 2022, revealing that it was AI-generated. His win pointed to the fact that AI images have now reached a level where even the jurors of a prestigious international photo competition can no longer tell them from a real photograph. *Filter* met him at his studio in Berlin to talk about the difference between photography and AI-generated images, his artistic work and his involvement in AI within the German Photo Council.

Interview with Boris Eldagsen
By Camilla Kragelund

Boris Eldagsen. Photo / Foto: Jan Sobottka

Camilla Kragelund: I first got to know your work when you won the Sony World Photography Award with an AI-generated image, sending shock waves through the photo world. When turning down the prize you said: ‘AI-images and photography shouldn’t compete in an award like this. They’re different entities. AI is not photography’, and afterwards you said that you’d submitted your work with a sort of ‘hackers’ attitude’ to test the system and initiate a debate about whether AI-generated photo realistic images are to be considered photography or not, and how we should deal with them. What did your stunt reveal?

Boris Eldagsen: Before winning the Sony Award, I’d applied for the BBA Photography Prize and the LensCulture Black & White Photography Award with the very same image. I became a finalist for both awards, posted the news on social media and linked the post to the jury members, informing them that the image wasn’t a photograph, but there was no response. When I won the Sony Award, Sony – or rather the event agency that run the award for Sony – also didn’t want to make transparent to the media that the image was AI-generated and had no interest in an open conversation.

Boris Eldagsen and Tanvir Taolad: *Trauma Porn*, 2023 – ongoing, detail.

Boris Eldagsen og Tanvir Taolad: *Trauma Porn*, 2023 – nu, detalje.

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PERCEPTION, PROPAGANDA AND PHOTOGRAPHY:

Notes on the image policy of the National Socialist state

Totalitarian states’ control of visual communication aims to suppress unwanted images and to create positive patterns of identification through the dissemination of desired images. The Nazi rulers recognised the potential of photography for propaganda purposes early on, and greatly promoted the film and photography industry.

By Rolf Sachsse

From 1622, with the founding of the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide (the Holy Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith)[1] as an anti-reformational, missionary and anti-Semitic instrument for propagating the ‘true’ (*fide*) Catholic faith in the aftermath of the Reformation, propaganda in Europe was the weapon of the Catholic Church. The dissolution of the Congregation in 1922 after exactly three centuries gave rise to the secularisation of propagandistic methods, whether in the advertising of consumer goods or the implementation of authoritarian goals in politics. While the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies in *Kritik der öffentlichen Meinung* (1922) rejects this strategy of propaganda, three books, coming from very different directions, emphasise its positive aspects: *Public Opinion* (1922) by the American journalist Walter Lippmann, which was translated into German in numerous magazine articles; *Deutsche Propaganda* (1922) by the German sociologist Johann Plege; and *Propaganda* (1928) by Sigmund Freud’s nephew, the Austrian-American journalist Edward Bernays. One man had read all these books and picked out what he could use for his purposes: the National Socialist propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, until 1925 a largely unemployed author of kitsch plays and short stories.

The Reich Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda

Six weeks after the transfer of power to Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist Party in Germany on 30 January 1933, the establishment of the new Reich Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda was announced on 13 March. The ministry consisted of several departments, which were organised centrally but operated largely independently. Photography was accorded a rather unspecific status in the administrative structure: although there was a separate Photography Department headed by the barely 23-year-old official of the SA student organisation Heiner Kurzbein, it was subordinate to the Main Department of the German Press (later Domestic Press). Even when the department was transformed into a Main Department for the Pictorial Press in 1936 and was given its own agencies, such as a pictorial press archive, it remained a side issue in the Reich press chief’s area of responsibility. In addition to monitoring what was happening in amateur photography, the Photo Department was mainly concerned with photojournalism, i.e. the supply of images to the press. In the Visual Arts and Film Departments, photography only played a supply role: its use was

‘The experience of the individual has become the experience of the people, and we can thank the camera for that’, Joseph Goebbels said in his opening speech at the *Die Kamera* photo fair in Berlin in 1933. The exhibition and fair had been planned long before the Nazi takeover and, through the work of Goebbels and his ministry, became the first demonstration of power by the Nazi media: with a Hall of Honour and large images from the Nazi movement, visitors were introduced to the new Reich, which seemingly consisted entirely of marching SA columns a male Hitler Youth and women whose main task was to bear children. It is not critical judgement that is being appealed to, but emotional experience. The goal is not the unfolding of the individual, but its inclusion in the mass.

”Den enkeltes oplevelse er blevet en folkeoplevelse, og det kan vi takke kameraet for”, udtalte Joseph Goebbels i sin åbningstale til fotomessen *Die Kamera* i Berlin i 1933. Udstillingen og messen var blevet planlagt længe før nazisternes magtovertagelse og blev gennem Goebbels og hans ministeriums arbejde de nazistiske mediers første magtdemonstration: Med en æressal og store billeder fra den nazistiske bevægelse blev de besøgende introduceret til det nye rige, som tilsyneladende udelukkende bestod af marcherende SA-kolonner, en mandlig Hitlerjugend og kvinder, hvis hovedopgave var at føde børn. Det er ikke kritisk dømmekraft, der appelleres til, men følelsesmæssig oplevelse. Målet er ikke individets udfoldelse, men dets optagelse i massen.

Cover of the exhibition catalogue for *Die Kamera*, Berlin, 1933. Design: Herbert Bayer.

Forsiden af udsstillingskataloget til *Die Kamera*, Berlin, 1933. Layout: Herbert Bayer.

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Macrodendronephthya darwinii (2024)

Popularly known as the *coralito*, this is one of the species currently being used to repopulate the Darwin and Wolf reefs as part of a major rewilding project in the far northwest of the Galapagos archipelago (Ecuador). Due to its supposed aphrodisiac properties (although these were never proven), for several hundred years the *coralito* was intensively harvested almost to the point of extinction.

Populært kendt som *coralito*, er dette en af de arter, der i øjeblikket bruges til at genbefolke Darwin- og Wolf-revene som led i et stort naturgenopretelses-projekt i den nordvestlige del af Galapagos-øgruppen (Ecuador). På grund af sine påståede afrodisiakiske egenskaber (selvom disse aldrig er blevet bevist) blev *coralito* i flere hundrede år høstet høstet intensivt, indtil den næsten blev udryddet.

Testa abyssalisa (2024)

Little is known about abyssal benthic organisms, but a recent descent in the Mariana Trench found this hybrid, halfway between the soft corals of the *Mussidae* family and corals with a stony skeleton. Dubbed, somewhat deceptively, ‘fruit of the sea’ for its form and colour, it is the most poisonous cnidarian known.

Der vides kun lidt om bentiske organismer i havets dyb, men under en nylig dykning i Marianergraven blev denne hybrid mellem blødkorallerne i familien *Mussidae* og koraller med et stenagtigt skelet fundet. Den er lidt misvisende blevet døbt ”havets frugt” på grund af sin form og farve, men er den mest giftige cnidarian, man kender til.

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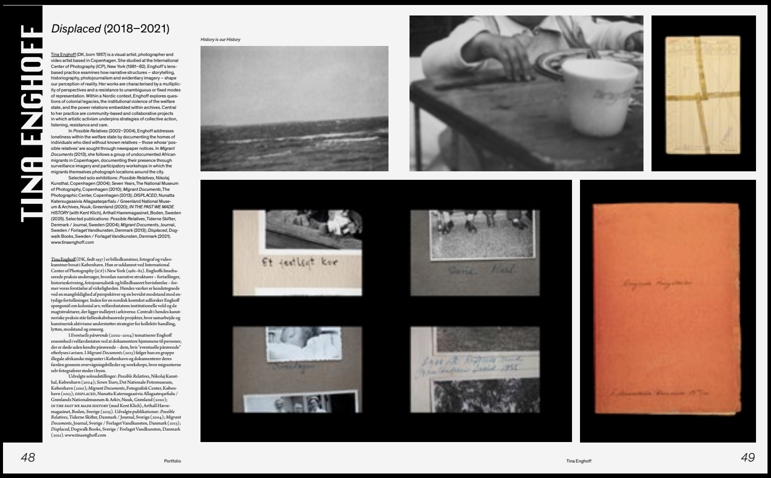

TINA ENGHOFF

Displaced (2018–2021)

History is our History

Tina Enghoff (DK, born 1957) is a visual artist, photographer and video artist based in Copenhagen. She studied at the International Center of Photography (ICP), New York (1981–82). Enghoff’s lens-based practice examines how narrative structures – storytelling, historiography, photojournalism and evidentiary imagery – shape our perception of reality. Her works are characterised by a multiplicity of perspectives and a resistance to unambiguous or fixed modes of representation. Within a Nordic context, Enghoff explores questions of colonial legacies, the institutional violence of the welfare state, and the power relations embedded within archives. Central to her practice are community-based and collaborative projects in which artistic activism underpins strategies of collective action, listening, resistance and care.

In *Possible Relatives* (2002–2004), Enghoff addresses loneliness within the welfare state by documenting the homes of individuals who died without known relatives – those whose ‘possible relatives’ are sought through newspaper notices. In *Migrant Documents* (2013), she follows a group of undocumented African migrants in Copenhagen, documenting their presence through surveillance imagery and participatory workshops in which the migrants themselves photograph locations around the city.

Selected solo exhibitions: *Possible Relatives*, Nikolaj Kunsthal, Copenhagen (2004); *Seven Years*, The National Museum of Photography, Copenhagen (2010); *Migrant Documents*, The Photographic Center, Copenhagen (2013); *DISPLACED*, Nunatta Katersugaasivia Allagaateqarfialu / Greenland National Museum & Archives, Nuuk, Greenland (2020); *IN THE PAST WE MADE HISTORY* (with Kent Klich), Arthall Havremagasinet, Boden, Sweden (2025). Selected publications: *Possible Relatives*, Tiderne Skifter, Denmark / Journal, Sweden (2004); *Migrant Documents*, Journal, Sweden / Forlaget Vandkunsten, Denmark (2013); *Displaced*, Dogwalk Books, Sweden / Forlaget Vandkunsten, Denmark (2021). www.tinaenghoff.com

Tina Enghoff (DK, født 1957) er billedkunstner, fotograf og videokunstner bosat i København. Hun er uddannet ved International Center of Photography (ICP) i New York (1981–82). Enghoffs linsebaserede praksis undersøger, hvordan narrative strukturer – fortællinger, historieskrivning, fotojournalistik og billedbaseret bevisførelse – former vores forståelse af virkeligheden. Hendes værker er kendetegnede ved en mangfoldighed af perspektiver og en bevidst modstand mod entydige fortolkninger. Inden for en nordisk kontekst udforsker Enghoff spørgsmål om kolonial arv, velfærdsstatens institutionelle vold og de magtstrukturer, der ligger indlejret i arkiverne. Centralt i hendes kunstneriske praksis står fællesskabsbaserede projekter, hvor samarbejde og kunstnerisk aktivisme understøtter strategier for kollektiv handling, lytten, modstand og omsorg.

I *Eventuelle pårørende* (2002–2004) tematiserer Enghoff ensomhed i velfærdsstaten ved at dokumentere hjemmene til personer, der er døde uden kendte pårørende – dem, hvis ”eventuelle pårørende” efterlyses i avisen. I *Migrant Documents* (2013) følger hun en gruppe illegale afrikanske migranter i København og dokumenterer deres færden gennem overvågningsbilleder og workshops, hvor migranterne selv fotograferer steder i byen.

Udvalgte soloudstillinger: *Possible Relatives*, Nikolaj Kunsthal, København (2004); *Seven Years*, Det Nationale Fotomuseum, København (2010); *Migrant Documents*, Fotografisk Center, København (2013); *DISPLACED*, Nunatta Katersugaasivia Allagaateqarfialu / Grønlands Nationalmuseum & Arkiv, Nuuk, Grønland (2020); *IN THE PAST WE MADE HISTORY* (med Kent Klich), Arthall Havremagasinet, Boden, Sverige (2025). Udvalgte publikationer: *Possible Relatives*, Tiderne Skifter, Danmark / Journal, Sverige (2004); *Migrant Documents*, Journal, Sverige / Forlaget Vandkunsten, Danmark (2013); *Displaced*, Dogwalk Books, Sverige / Forlaget Vandkunsten, Danmark (2021). www.tinaenghoff.com

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The theoretical contributions are complemented by seven portfolios featuring works by internationally recognised artists. Joan Fontcuberta (ES) reveals how easily we can be fooled by manipulated images. By combining real events, authentic photographs and natural history specimens with fictitious scientific discoveries and AI-generated images purporting to be genuine scientific photography, he creates uncertainty about where the boundary lies between fact and fiction, truth and manipulation. Laura Rautjoki (FI) examines how Finnish women have been represented since the invention of photography and how this image of women can be reshaped and reimagined using AI-image generator tools. Lewis Koch’s (US) series *Hostile Takeover (11.08.16)* is a reaction to the political climate in the United States following Donald Trump’s election victory in 2016 and the global spread of fake news, whereas Andreas Koch’s (DE) photomontages demonstrate how convincingly digital photographs can be manipulated using image-editing software. Through techniques such as double exposure, backlighting, chemical traces and long exposure times, visual artist Astrid Kruse Jensen (DK) creates dreamlike interiors in which past and present merge in a shifted reality. Finally, Tina Enghoff (DK) and Andréas Lang (DE) mix archival material, documentary and staged photography in order to address difficult themes such as post-colonialism or genocide. Central to their practice is the question of what role photography, as a medium, plays in the negotiation of what is considered a true image of reality.

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About *Filter for fotografi*

Filter for fotografi is a photography journal in book format that examines the social, political and artistic significance of photography from a cultural studies perspective. Each issue is dedicated to a specific theme and integrates both contemporary photography and historical photographic material, encompassing a range of photographic practices, including amateur, artistic, documentary, press, travel and scientific photography.

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