**Words into Images**

Museum Studies Program

Department of Historical Studies

                                                                    Winter term 2025

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If you, historians, or poets, or mathematicians had not seen things with your eyes you could not report of them in writing. And if you, 0 poet, tell a story with your pen, the painter with his brush can tell it more easily, with simpler completeness and less tedious to be understood… Now tell me which is the nearer to the actual man: the name of man or the image of the man. The name of man differs in different countries, but his form is never changed but by death…

                                                                       Leonardo Da Vinci, The Paragone of Painting and Poetry 1500



Anselm Kiefer, The High Pristess 1985-89

The course intends to explore the specificities, but also the close family relationships of archives and museums (libraries, as well); explore the possibilities, and also the limits of turning words into images, textual documents into visuals. It deals with words, texts, the tension between literal meaning and figurative excesses, with *energeia,* the active, activating quality of images, and the evocative character of both textual documents and artifacts. The class follows a selected history and theory of archives; the utopia of collecting, preserving, and presenting universal knowledge, and the efforts of turning textual documents into visual objects, icons, memorials, monuments, installations, moving images. As Aristotle wrote in *Poetics*: “A verbal representation was said to be persuasive when it gave the impression that it might have been alive”. Examples and practices inside and outside the archives will be studied as well: visual theology, icons that bleed, excrete oil and tears, the *vera icon*, merging body and image thus creating the “true image”; the myths and problems of photographic images (the fictional character of images that, however, “does not prevent authorities from iris recognition or the surveillance of every sort of public space.”); map making (cartographic and anatomical); political gestures and propaganda; mis-(and dis-)information by images; the use of images as forensic evidence and in legal procedure, especially in grave violations of human rights; etc.

Members of the class will face the problems of the difficulties of authenticating (archival) documents; the diminishing credibility and trustworthiness of archival institutions (and the efforts to restore them), the gains and losses (of authenticity, evidentiary value, and authority) of turning textual documents into images; whether documents turned into images make it difficult to grasp the historicity of texts at a time when the division that separated textual from visual traces of events is becoming thinner by the day.

Members of the class (co-taught by members of the Blinken OSA Archivum, István Rév, Katalin Székely, head of the creative programs at OSA, József Bóné, head of the IT department at OSA) will, besides theoretical issues, get acquainted with technologies that make it possible to turn words into images, exhibitions based on archival material, documents and documentary works. The course will include a day-long excursion to the Archive in Budapest.

The consulted works include texts and (moving) images, in most cases art installations or films with an artistic intent. The class format is a seminar with active participation of the students, who are expected to introduce, and interpret a text or a video in class.

Grades will be based on general classwork (25%), in-class presentation (25%), and an individual, semester-long final project, turning a particular, self-selected document into images (online exhibition, montage, photospread, icon, moving image, etc.)

1st week:

The Archives: the space, the institution, the notion, and the problems.

Reading:

Danilo Kiš, *The Encyclopedia of the Dead*

<https://xpressenglish.com/encyclopedia-of-the-dead/>

Cornelia Vismann, *Files. Law and Media Technology.* Stanford U. P. Stanford, 2008 pp. 55-61, 117-122, 161-164.  [https://monoskop.org/File:Vismann\_Cornelia\_Files\_Law\_and\_Media\_Technology.pdf](https://monoskop.org/File%3AVismann_Cornelia_Files_Law_and_Media_Technology.pdf)

2nd week

Memory in the archive.

Reading:

Jan Assmann*, Communicative and Cultural Memory*

In: Pál S. Varga – Karl Katschthaler – Donald E. Morse – Miklós Takács (eds.) Loci Memoriae Hungaricae I. pp. 36-43.

<https://dea.lib.unideb.hu/server/api/core/bitstreams/524bb96a-d1ae-46e2-bef7-506da8d49697/content#page=22>

Aleida Assmann, *Transformations between History and Memory*.

Social Research: An International Quarterly, Volume 75, Number 1, Spring 2008, pp. 49-72

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/527984/pdf>

Optional: Watch *Archive Fever - Derrida, Steedman, & the Archival Turn*

[**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHtXeUH4gnY**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHtXeUH4gnY)

3rd week

“The Archival Turn.

Reading:

Sara Callahan**,** *When the Dust Has Settled: What Was the Archival Turn, and Is It Still Turning?*

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/00043249.2024.2317690?needAccess=true>

Watch: *The Note. A chance Event*. Online exhibition at OSA

Watch: *Anselm Kiefer's Finnegans Wake Exhibition at the White Cube Gallery in Bermondsey, London*

[Anselm Kiefer's Finnegans Wake Exhibition at the White Cube Gallery in Bermondsey, London - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3w4fxQgIReY)

4th week

Images of objectivity.

*Watch: Objectivity: The Limits of Scientific Sight - Peter L. Galison*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPnJ8ENDNwg>

Reading: Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *The Image of Objectivity*. Representations, No. 40, Special Issue: Seeing Science (Autumn, 1992), pp. 81-128

https://cspeech.ucd.ie/Fred/docs/Galison.pdf

Watch***:*** *The Pernkopf Atlas*

*Who Was Eduard Pernkopf?*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkq5OqGxCco&t=344s>

*The Visible Human Project*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GPB1sjEhIQ>

5th week:

Turning words into images.

Read:

W. J. T. Mitchell, *Ekphrasis and the Other*.

<https://complit.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/COL1000-Week11-Nov25_WJT_Mitchell.pdf>

Matthew Biro, *Representation and Event: Anselm Kiefer, Joseph Beuys, and the Memory of the Holocaust*

The Yale Journal of Criticism, Volume 16, Number 1, Spring 2003, pp. 113-146

<https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/1/article/41326/pdf>

Watch:

*Anselm Kiefer’s Germany, Covered in Dust | A Closer Look*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AAl91Hc1MKw>

*Anselm Kiefer: History is a clay*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPEcPn85D8w>

Wim Wenders, *Anselm*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c09sdGYDokI>

6th week

A.I. supported tools to turn words into images.

Guest lecture by József Bóné, Chief of IT at Blinken OSA Archivum

7th week

Christian Boltanski’s archives.

Reading: Ernst van Alphen, *Visual Archives and the Holocaust: Christian Boltanski, Ydessa Hendeles and Peter Forgacs* In: A. Van den Braembussche et al. (eds.) *Intercultural Aesthetics: A Worldview Perspective*. 2009

David Houston Jones, *All the moments of our lives: selfarchiving from Christian Boltanski to lifelogging*, Archives and Records, 2015 <https://doi.org/10.1080/23257962.2015.1010149>

Watch:

*Visite exclusive de l'exposition Boltanski | Centre Pompidou*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2NMmDmBShyk&t=21s>

*BOLTANSKI PERSONNES 2010*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXND1GZdBzM&t=128s>

*Chance by Christian Boltanski: Sydney Festival*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0inh2ooFWq0>

Christian Boltanski*, Danach*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ykDQdEpOU4>

8th week

Preview presentation of the individual words-transformed-into-images individual projects in class.

9th week

Turning memories into moving images.

Watch:

Tadeusz Kantor, *The Dead Class*

[kantor\_extract-en.pdf](http://subjectile.com/docs/kantor_extract-en.pdf)

*The cart. Fragment of Tadeusz Kantor's 1985 play "Let the Artists Die"*

[The cart. Fragment of Tadeusz Kantor's 1985 play "Let the Artists Die"](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PK9L537FYBk)

Andrzej Wajda, *Umarla klasa [Dead Class] (1977)* by Andrzej Wajda, *Clip: The dead class bring in their former selves*

[Umarla klasa [Dead Class] (1977) by Andrzej Wajda, Clip: The dead class bring in their former selves](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L65LYrlk4Kk)

Recommended to watch:

Tadeusz Kantor: *The Dead Class* the full-length film by Adrzej Wajda

[Tadeusz Kantor "Umarła klasa" (Dead class) [English subtitles]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a235hHGFIps)

10th week

Turning archival sources into art and vice versa.

Watch: Forensic Architecture

*German Colonial Genocide in Namibia, Shark Island*

[German Colonial Genocide In Namibia: Shark Island ← Forensic Architecture](https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/shark-island)

*Triple-chaser* by Forensic Architecture

[**https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/triple-chaser**](https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/triple-chaser)

*Blank paper becomes symbol of China’s protests -* BBC News

[**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IbdCaaW2cDc**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IbdCaaW2cDc)

11th week

The other way round: images into words

Reading: James A. W. Heffernan, *Museum of Words. The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery.* The U. of Chicago P. Chicago 1993. pp. 1-9.

<https://books.google.hu/books?id=z9IfT4xl_tAC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=true>

Carlo Ginzburg, *EKPHRASIS AND QUOTATION* Tijdschrift voor Filosofie , March 1988, Nr. 1, pp. 3-19

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/40885536.pdf?refreqid=fastly-default%3Aae339f696df870ed85c53baf1ccdbdf4&ab_segments=&initiator=&acceptTC=1>

Listen*: The Trial*. *A Memorialization of words*. A Memorial. Week-long audio public program at OSA, 2008

