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The things in between: photographs from the Mariannahill Mission in KwaZulu-Natal and other objects in situations of intermediality
Rippe, C.

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Author: Rippe, C.

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Propositions to the Dissertation *The Things in Between: Photographs from the Mariannhill Mission in KwaZulu-Natal and other Objects in Situations of Intermediality*

Christoph Rippe, Leiden University — Defence, July 1, 2021

1. To understand image conventions and artistic discourses around colonial photographs, they must be studied through contemporary aesthetic concepts, such as “resemblance” and “tableaux vivants”.
2. Considering mission-produced photographs as “mimetic capital” allows to study them in relation to other images and media. In so far, situations of intermediality can best be approached as situated experiences.
3. Since the 1880s, Mariannhill Monastery was a highly exceptional space within the emerging South African tourist infrastructure. A professional photographic studio became the central hub that both constructed and connected the monastery’s interior and exterior. In this context, the conventional guided tour worked as both experience and narrative device.
4. Some photographic occasions may be conceived of as taking place in particular “contact zones”. This allows to reassemble the “photography complex” and its extended materiality, i.e. the situated relationships of people, objects, and images.
5. Missionaries curated museums in order to influence their allies. Related exhibitions and displays may therefore be considered as media in their own rights, in particular in their arranged forms for the purpose of being photographed.
6. The use, work, and impact of colonial photographs can best be understood by closely following them as “working objects” along their trajectories and transformations through the network of multiple interpretive communities in transnational circulation.
7. Black figurative art in South Africa during the first half of the 20th century, must be analysed as a social project in interdependence with the social project of segregation, as it was discussed not only as a content apart, but also as a practice apart.
8. Due to their potential power as mediators in social relationships, photographs may—under specific circumstances—be considered as particular kinds of human remains.
9. Just like “colonial”, “ethnographic”, “ethnological”, and “anthropological” photography, “missionary photography” as such, does not exist. Photographs produced by missionaries must always be analysed within their specific situations of production, circulation and consumption and according to overlaps, influences, and commonalities with other images.