

# Media, Encounter, Witness: Troubling Pasts



The Research Series will be a broad consideration of the aesthetic, political and ethical issues of 'seeing' and mediality. Our definition of 'media' of witness includes photography, cinema, television, visual art, theatre, digital texts, printed texts, material culture, spectacle, and the body in performance. We begin from the proposition that cultural meaning cannot be understood as separate from forms of production. The technological, aesthetic, and social dimensions of such productions are at the centre of this series' investigations into how 'witnessing' is mediated and enacted.

The series is aimed at opening up significant conceptual frameworks and questions about the intricate and problematic position of the witness, in relation to encounters with troubled pasts. We are keen to explore and demonstrate transferable disciplinary frameworks of theorising 'seeing', encompassing approaches from literature, art history, history, media studies, and gender studies. Ranging from the mid-nineteenth century to the present moment, the series takes a longer historical view than many current considerations of witnessing, which tend to focus on witnessing traumas of the second half of the twentieth century. We will also explore the relationship of technological innovations and aesthetics to forms of witnessing since the 19th century, including photography, cinema, the internet and digitization. In so doing, this series charts a historical and conceptual trajectory of how specific media produce meaning, based on empirical case studies and inflected by advances in cultural memory and media studies.

The series will consider how mediation of events and experiences enables, facilitates, and creates witnesses. Within this dynamic, the audience functions as double witnesses of the medium of the spectacle and the experience being depicted. Ultimately, the events in the series will pose the overarching question of how the formal and epistemological bases of different media (textual, visual, material, performative) affect the creation and positioning of the witness.

This Research Series will run at the UCD Humanities Institute 2017-2019, and consist of artist events, academic talks, film screenings, and research workshops.

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