“Time is Over and the World Has Ended”: Khalik Allah’s Street Photographs as Energy Charts

This paper brings Gilles Deleuze’s sparse, largely dismissive thoughts on the medium of photography in conversation with the work of New York-based photographer Khalik Allah, especially his recent book Souls Against the Concrete (2017), which comprises a series of portraits of the migrant inhabitants, most of them “crack heads,” of the corner of 125th St and Lexington Avenue in Harlem, New York.

In most of his writings on art and its political effectiveness, Deleuze condemns photography for being inevitably figurative and narrative. He hence rejects the medium from the realm of art, and, instead, associates it with science’s spatialization of time and the resulting homogenization of any ontology of difference. By focusing not so much on the representational content as on the vibrant surfaces of a specific body of photographic work, I contest Deleuze’s use of “photography” as a term of abuse, and seek to bring the medium into an affirmative aesthetic regime that moves beyond perceptive determination, and thus beyond the reach of global capitalism and (digital) reproduction.

Wednesday, March 31, 2021
12:30PM—1:30PM
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renée c. hoogland is Professor of English at Wayne State University in Detroit. She is the author of three books: A Violent Embrace: Art and Aesthetics after Representation (2014); Lesbian Configurations. (1997); and Elizabeth Bowen: A Reputation in Writing (1994). She served as the editor of Criticism: A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts for six years, and edited the first volume of Macmillan Interdisciplinary Handbooks on Gender: Sources, Perspectives, and Methodologies (2016)—a ten-volume series for which she also acted as Senior Editor in Chief. hoogland has published widely in her areas of interest, including literature and culture after 1870, visual culture, critical theory, modern and contemporary art, gender and sexuality studies, and affect theory. She is currently working on a book project titled “The Other Side of Nowhere; or, Haunted by Death: Thoughts on Contemporary Photography,” and on an edited collection of essays, titled, “State of Exposure: “Post-Truth” and the Politics of Looking.”