

BOOK LAUNCH

The Modern Dream of Order: Victoria, Photography, and the Social Imagination

Monday, 24 Nov 2025

17:00 hours s.t.
Centre for British Studies
Anton-Wilhelm-Amo-Str. 60
(formerly Mohrenstraße)
10117 Berlin

This lecture is a cooperation between the
HU Department of Art and Visual History,
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences,
and the Centre for British Studies.

Prof Eva Ehninger

Modern Art History, Department of Art and Visual History
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

This book offers a critical analysis of modernity through the lens of 19th-century photography in Britain. The study combines art history, the history of photography, as well as gender, cultural and media studies, and features a wealth of previously unpublished visual material. It explores how commercial portrait photography – the largest and yet most neglected visual archive of the 19th-century – shaped social relations and provided visual stability in an era of rapid change. The book makes use of Queen Victoria's ubiquitous photographic presence in private and communal contexts, to demonstrate how new visual media undergirded the power of conventional concepts of social order and stability. Modernity, seen from this perspective, is not determined primarily by new technologies and their distributive power, but rather by the utilization of these technologies for the visual construction of imaginations of the social. A critical reflection of this mechanism is crucial to understanding current media practices as well.

Eva Ehninger is Professor of Modern Art History at the Institute of Art and Visual History and Co-Director of the Centre for Advanced Study 'inherit – heritage in transformation' at HU Berlin.

with a response by

Prof Gesa Stedman

Director and Chair British Culture and Literature
Centre for British Studies, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Everyone is welcome to attend.

Großbritannien-Zentrum der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Anton-Wilhelm-Amo-Straße 60 | 10117 Berlin | www.gbz.hu-berlin.de

Register at: events.gbz@hu-berlin.de
For last-minute changes please see our website:
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