

## CONSPIRACY WEEK 10 - 18 FEBRUARY 2017

26 January 2017

The Photographers' Gallery presents *Conspiracy Week*, nine days of special events exploring the changing complexities of conspiracy theories; the myriad ways these ideas evolve, and their political significance. The programme includes: *Divisive Moments*, an exclusive exhibition of UFO photography; a new digital commission for the Media Wall as well as talks, artist film screenings and online resources.

From conjecture around the moon landings, evidence of extraterrestrials, political hypotheses and the manipulation of our newsfeeds, conspiracy theories have always existed. However, since the attacks on the World Trade Centre in 2001 and, most recently, during the American elections, there has been a huge increase and shift in the methods utilised by conspiracy theorists to respond and share diverse views of extraordinary phenomena. In addition, the advent of the Internet – with its ability to communicate and apparently verify information instantly – has provided the fertile ground needed for conspiracists to spread their message in a world consumed by 'alternative facts'.

*Conspiracy Week* offers a fascinating range of activities and presentations to explore and respond to the increased confusion between fact and fiction in a 'post-truth' world; and examines the role photography and the moving image play within these complex narratives.

Curated by UK-based writer and publisher Gordon McDonald, the exhibition *Divisive Moments* draws on the extensive archive of the foremost UFO research pioneer, Lt. Colonel Wendelle C. Stevens (1923-2010, USA). Over his 50-year career, Stevens amassed one of the largest photographic collections of UFO images, as well as publishing numerous books and documentaries including *Contact: The Billy Meier Phenomenon* (1978).

The exhibition includes 240 original slide images, used by Stevens on his UFO lecture tours, as well as his notes, books, ephemera and films. It will also explore some of the most notorious cases of twentieth century UFO history including *Abduction at Botucatu* – the story of the repeated abduction of Brazilian man Joao Valerio da Silva and his eldest son by aliens. The presentation includes testimonials, documents, books, tape-recordings of alien language and photographs of an 'alien' life form.

Especially commissioned for our digital Media Wall, artist Joey Holder has created *SELACHIMORPHA*, a screen based work, which takes a particular sequence from the 1975 film *Jaws* as a means to look at the ways in which manipulated images are appropriated and circulated by Internet culture as 'fact'. The scene, which shows a shooting star flaring behind hero Roy Schneider, has

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become fodder for conspiracy theories. The ease of 'adapting' and then distributing images – such as deserts, outer space and oceans – offers a rich breeding ground for the fictional and make believe. Taking its name from a scientific classification for sharks, this project morphs between factual and fictional images, symbols and memes; exposing the continually shifting belief systems we use to define our world.

In addition, our online platform, [unthinking.photography](http://unthinking.photography) explores the role 'fauxtography' plays in shaping contemporary reality. First coined during the 2006 Israel-Lebanon war to describe the blatant use of manipulated images in news articles, the term encapsulates how casual we have become in our relationship to such images and the way they are used to spread populist discourses and fan conspiracy theories.

*Conspiracy Week* also presents a dynamic programme of talks and artist film screenings, which examine the broader psychological, social and political roles played by conspiracy theories today.

Talks include:

- *How Did We Get Here? From Rational Paranoia to the Post Truth Conspiracist President*, led by Clare Birchall, author of *Knowledge Goes Pop: From Conspiracy Theory to Gossip* and King's College lecturer. Tuesday 14 February
- *Who Believes in Conspiracy Theories?* led by Dr Hugo Drochon, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, CRASSH Conspiracy and Democracy Research Project. Wednesday 15 February

For full programme details please visit [tpg.org.uk](http://tpg.org.uk)

*Divisive Moments* is presented in collaboration with Photomonth Krakow 2017

#### Press information

**For further press information and image requests please contact:**

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#### Notes for Editors

##### The Photographers' Gallery

The Photographers' Gallery opened in 1971 in Great Newport Street, London, as the UK's first independent gallery devoted to photography. It was the first public gallery in the UK to exhibit many key names in international photography, including Juergen Teller, Robert Capa, Sebastião Salgado and Andreas Gursky. The Gallery has also been instrumental in establishing contemporary British photographers, including Martin Parr and Corinne Day. In 2009, the Gallery moved to 16 – 18 Ramillies Street in Soho, the first stage in its plan to create a 21<sup>st</sup> century home for photography. Following an eighteen months long redevelopment project, the Gallery reopened to the public in 2012. The success of The Photographers' Gallery over the past four decades has helped to establish photography as a recognised art form, introducing new audiences to photography and championing its place at the heart of visual culture. [www.thephotographersgallery.org.uk](http://www.thephotographersgallery.org.uk)

#### Visitor Information

Opening times: Mon – Sat, 10:00 - 18:00; Thu, 10:00 - 20:00; Sun, 11:00 - 18:00

Admission: free until noon (Mon - Sun) and then £4 / £2.5 concessions

Address: 16-18 Ramillies Street, London W1F 7LW

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W: [thephotographersgallery.org.uk](http://thephotographersgallery.org.uk)

# THE PHOTOGRAPHERS' GALJERY

PRESS IMAGES

## CONSPIRACY WEEK 10 - 18 FEBRUARY 2017



**Image 1**  
Photograph of RAMA by abductee Joao Valerio da Silva  
From the UFO Photo Archives of Wendelle Stevens  
Collection of Gordon MacDonald



**Image 2**  
Photograph by Billy Meier  
From the UFO Photo Archives of Wendelle Stevens  
Collection of Gordon MacDonald



**Image 3**  
Photograph by Billy Meier  
From the UFO Photo Archives of Wendelle Stevens  
Collection of Gordon MacDonald



**Image 4**  
From the UFO Photo Archives of Wendelle Stevens  
Collection of Gordon MacDonald



Image 5  
From the UFO Photo Archives of Wendelle Stevens  
Collection of Gordon MacDonald



Image 6  
Stereoscope of Mount Washington, 1870-71  
Considered by many as the first UFO photograph  
Collection of Gordon MacDonald



Image 7  
From the UFO Photo Archives of Wendelle Stevens  
Collection of Gordon MacDonald



Image 8  
Joey Holder  
*Selachimorpha*, 2017  
© Joey Holder  
Courtesy of the artist

For high-res press images and more information contact the Press Office. Call Grace O'Connor on +44 (0) 20 7087 9346 or email [grace.oconnor@tpg.org.uk](mailto:grace.oconnor@tpg.org.uk)

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