

SPEAKING OF
PHOTOGRAPHY

Small Tintype of Young Black Woman, Seated, 1860-
1870. Richard Bell Family Fonds, Brock University.



“FUGITIVITY”: Cultivating the Black Subject in 19th-century Photography in Southern Ontario

JULIE CROOKS

*Rebanks Postdoctoral Fellow
Royal Ontario*

**Friday, February 12, 2016
at 6:30 p.m.**

York Amphitheatre, EV 1.605
1515 Sainte-Catherine St. W.
H3G 2W1
Metro Guy-Concordia

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to the public.*

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Museum Building on her previous research on the work of West African photographer Alphonso Lisk-Carew, Julie Crooks looks at studio portrait practices from a Black Atlantic context where portraiture was used for commemoration and in the formation of new social identities. Her lecture will examine the ways in which Blacks, by the mid- to late-nineteenth century, in settlements throughout Southern Ontario, adopted photography as a critical and powerful tool for self-representation. Former fugitive slaves and their descendants used photography to “disrupt” fixed notions of the abject black body, thereby cultivating new articulations of their mutable subjectivities. Since the majority of the migrants were self-manumitted slaves from the United States, Crooks offers the concept of “fugitivity” as a critical framework. Her work explores both the Alvin McCurdy archive and the digital collection at Brock University, considering both as “fugitive archives” (built by the original collectors with defiance and resistance), in order to preserve, salvage and recover the histories of black Canadian communities whose stories and material artifacts are often left untold or subject to erasure. Crooks received a PhD from the Department of History of Art and Archaeology at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. The title of her dissertation is “Alphonso Lisk-Carew and Early Photography in Sierra Leone.” Her research focuses on historical photography in Sierra Leone, West Africa and the diaspora. She has taught numerous courses in these fields at the Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto), as well as Ontario College of Art and Design University (OCADU, Toronto), University of Toronto, Wilfrid Laurier University, and York University (Toronto). Julie Crooks is a Rebanks Postdoctoral Fellow at the Royal Ontario Museum researching the various engagements of black/African audiences with the African Gallery and the photographic history of Blacks in Canada.

Speaking of Photography is organized by the Department of Art History. The series, now in its eighth year, is made possible by the generosity of an anonymous donor, with additional support from the Gail and Stephen A. Jarislowsky Institute for Studies in Canadian Art; Ciel Variable magazine, and Château Versailles Hotel.