

## SPEAKING OF PHOTOGRAPHY



"Spanish Village," *Life*,  
April 9, 1951, 126-127  
(detail).

# Photographic Essay versus Pictorial Essay: publishing press photographs

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Ryerson Image Centre (RIC),  
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at 6:30 p.m.

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

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In August 1937, one year after its release, the American magazine *Life* added to its table of contents a category called "photographic essay" under which thousands of essays were published until 1963, including those by renowned photojournalist Eugene Smith. Precisely defined in an article entitled, "The Camera as Essayist" (April 1937), the photographic essay appeared to recognize the journalistic status of photographers and provide a new means for them to express their point of view. An examination of the photographic essay's content reveals that most of them were actually the product of the editorial team taking advantage of multiple photographic sources to convey their ideas. Furthermore, some of the most famous photographic essays were not classified as such in the table of contents but instead as "pictorial essays." **When does a photographic series become too pictorial, or not photographic enough?** This lecture will propose an answer to this question and will emphasize the role of "aesthetics" in the publication of press photographs.

**Thierry Gervais** is assistant professor at Ryerson University and Head of Research at the Ryerson Image Centre (RIC), Toronto, with numerous exhibitions and publications on photojournalism to his credit. He received his PhD from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Paris) in 2007 and he was editor-in-chief of *Études photographiques* from 2007 to 2013. His book, *La Fabrique de l'information visuelle. Photographies et magazines d'actualité*, will be released in March, 2015 (Paris, Textuel editions) and will be published in English by Bloomsbury in 2017.

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