The British experience with American independent photography, 1944-1980

Abstract
This dissertation explores the ways in which US-based photographic practices shaped British independent photography from the late stages of the Second World War to the beginning of the 1980s. America had become the center of the Western artistic and literary universes by the late 1940s, and the US had led the way in photography from at least the 1930s and arguably from the 1910s. American photographic technology, education, and aesthetics looked enviably advanced to Britons for most of the twentieth century, and those on the photographic vanguard in Britain cultivated relationships with their transatlantic counterparts in the hope of effecting change in British institutions. During the period studied, photographic traffic mostly emanated from the US, accompanying a broader stream of ideas, capital and cultural products that were eagerly consumed by many and resisted in other quarters as the pernicious products of American cultural imperialism. As ideas, images, and technology flowed into Britain from the US, photographic collections and personnel from Britain flowed out. American photographic practice in Britain was promulgated as much by its British recipients as their US counterparts. Influential professionals like magazine editor Bill Jay, Arts Council officer Barry Lane and freelance photographer Tony Ray-Jones sought to stimulate British independent photography by importing American institutional and aesthetic models. This catalytic process had the effect of invigorating photography in Britain which both developed along and ultimately diverged from American models. This work contributes to a larger body of scholarship examining the transnational lineages of artistic and cultural production through analyzing how actors in this flow of information sought to rework and domesticate artistic forms and ideas to suit their own purposes.

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Despite the American Revolution, old bonds with the British, based on a common language and culture and bloodlines, endured—especially in the North, which was also heavily dependent on the British mercantile system. Pro-French feeling was strongest in the South and among Jefferson's Republicans. The United States preferred to trade with both nations, but the British blockaded France and her colonies and began seizing American ships transporting goods to French ports. War with Britain was averted as a result of the Jay Treaty (1795), but war with France then became the problem. France deno