

# membrana

## Membrana – Magazine on Photography

### *Call for articles & projects: Backdrop*

Throughout its relatively short cultural history, photographer's studio backdrop has alongside different props served as a creative and imaginary place of wish fulfilment, aspirations or nostalgic longing. It has created and followed pictorial conventions, and broken with them at the same time and lastly in the digital age it has evolved into the ever and instantly changing backscreen in which the frivolous creativity seems to be unleashed in its fullness. Regardless of its form – either as a fancy 19<sup>th</sup> century attic studio, characterless shopping mall cubicle, a makeshift setup in student admission office or the portable backdrop of a street peddler portraitist – photographer's backdrop is first and foremost a place of exchange of mastery of technique, desires, conventions and money, guided by the wish is a reproduction of prevailing social norms and conventions, or a temporary shelter from them. Even today there seems to be a certain charm in the sociability and ritualistic nature of old photographer's studio backdrop practices. Not only that – backdrop always served as a background, a frame, an ideological grid – artistic and scientific – on which the object of interest, desire or investigation itself was superimposed, thus delineating, exposing, accentuating its features.

Membrana no 5. seeks to address the backdrop and studio as a space for performance, a workplace, a metaphorical setting for imagi(ni)ng identities and constructing relations. We therefore conceptualise the (studio) backdrop as either location or expression of identity, fantasy, conventions, and administration.

We invite contributions that explore the photographer's backdrop from (but not limited to) the following perspectives:

- studio backdrop conventions, meaning and social significance
- power relations and the photographer's backdrop
- conceptual and theoretical differences between notions of backdrop and background
- backdrop imaging diversity (painted, posters, collages)
- street and city as backdrop
- backdrop as a social setting – the ritualistic aspect of the studio practices
- the reinvention of the backdrop in a digital age – transformation of traditional studios, the computer as a “digital studio”, digital backdrop
- physical and imaginative backdrop spaces
- backdrop in historical and contemporary scientific uses (eg. Anthropometry)
- the photo-montage, creativity, conventions and pictorial norms
- backdrop diversity as cultural diversity (European, African, American, Middle Eastern, Australian, Indian etc. photography studio practices)
- outdoor backdrop practices (makeshift studios)

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## *Format of contributions*

- Essays, theoretical papers, overview articles, interviews (approx. 14.000 characters with spaces), visuals encouraged.
- Short essays, columns (approx. 6.000 characters with spaces), visuals encouraged.
- Photographic projects and artwork: proposals for non-commissioned work or samples of work.

Contributions will be published in the English edition – magazine *Membrana* (ISSN 2463-8501) as well as in the Slovenian edition – magazine *Fotografija* (ISSN 1408-3566). Magazine *Fotografija* is in ERIH PLUS database.

## *Deadlines*

Please contact the editors at [editors\(at\)membrana.si](mailto:editors(at)membrana.si). The deadline for finished contributions from accepted proposals is 30 September 2018.

## *About Membrana / Fotografija*

*Membrana* is a contemporary photography magazine dedicated to promoting a profound and theoretically grounded understanding of photography. Its aim is to encourage new, bold, and alternative conceptions of photography as well as new and bold approaches to photography in general. Positioning itself in the space between scholarly magazines and popular publications, it offers an open forum for critical reflection on the medium, presenting both analytical texts and quality visuals. The magazine is published bi-annually in the summer and winter in the English and in Slovenian under the title *Fotografija* by the Slovene non-profit institute Membrana.

More about the third edition can be found at: <http://www.membrana.si/en/book/membrana-no-3/>  
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