Photography arrived in China as early as the 1840s, fascinating Chinese and international communities as a revolutionary new way of making images. Photography has been a constant catalyst for creative dialogues in China: between modernity and tradition, past and present, and manual and mechanical reproduction. Photography resonated with China’s existing art ecosystem, encouraging a nationalist fervour, shaping popular interests and providing new meanings to China’s past. From its origins in the early 19th century to the present, photography has played a central role in the artistic, cultural, political, social, and economic challenges and changes that shaped modern China.

In a course convened by Dr Marine Cabos-Brullé, you will be taught by leading international scholars, artists, and curators, allowing you to see this complex cultural phenomenon through multiple lenses. You will explore the changing practices and multiples trajectories that have shaped photography in China, from the advent of the medium in 1839 to contemporary times. How have photographs interacted with local and international cultures? What subjects, topics and themes have photographers been drawn to in the past 182 years? How do historic photographic archives shape contemporary experiments? How is photography from China curated and received today?

By bringing together academic specialists, museum professionals and artists, these eight, weekly lectures will explore the role of photography in shaping and reshaping almost two centuries of Chinese visual culture.