



# Photo Archives and the Photographic Memory of Art History Part III, March 25 - 26, 2011 Institute of Fine Arts, New York University

*All That's Fit: Nationalist Struggle and Early Photojournalism in Egypt*

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This paper explores the ambiguous function of state-controlled public photojournalistic archives in Egypt just prior to the popular uprisings that began on January 25, 2011. In this context, the archive persisted as an uneasy site of memory under the auspices of a thirty-year regime that insisted on its own ahistoricity, instead deploying images of historic events and personages towards self-mythologizing ends.

My research focused originally on the development of early photojournalism in conjunction with the emergence of anti-colonial and nationalist struggle in Egypt, and photojournalism's role in producing and disseminating images of the nation prior to 1952. Despite limiting the scope of this research to photographs already approved by censors for public consumption through publication, gaining access to longstanding photojournalistic archives at the periodical publishing houses of Al Ahram and Dar al Hilal in Cairo presented many obstacles.

I address the generative role of erasure and obfuscation in the production of the photojournalistic image and its archive both in relation to this problematic of access encountered over the course of a research process undertaken in the summer of 2010, and the images of a nation encountered in those photographs dating to between c. 1919-1952, which I was ultimately able to examine.

## *Biographical Note*

Clare Davies is a doctoral candidate and Erwin Panofsky Fellow at the Institute of Fine Arts in New York. She divides her time between New York and Cairo and is currently working on a dissertation exploring the passage of certain visual conventions across media in interwar Egypt, and ultimately their adoption and mutation within the framework of an emerging fine arts tradition.