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Date: Wed Oct 2, 2002 9:30:20 AM America/Mexico_City

Dear Pedro

I would like to let you know that my class of second year students are due to respond to some of your Zonezero editorials in the next few days. In fact, their assignment is due on Monday next. This is part of a larger assignment that requires of each students to complete a related set of tasks - set out for them on www.is.und.ac.za/electronicimage/tutorial5.htm. So - hopefully they will be thoughtful and reasonably informed comments, although these are fairly young students and beginners in this field. The thrust of the course is to place contemporary debate about digital images within a longer history of photography, as is evident from the course website.

They would obviously be thrilled to have a reply from you in the next couple of weeks. They have been told to write fairly short but well formulated and carefully considered responses that reflect their wider reading, and that may provide a URL to webpages that present their own (beginners!) work in photoshop experimenting with the possibilities of altering photographs, on which they are also required to comment.

The course has already asked them to think about what it means to read an image, the ways in which 'pre-digital' photography involved framing and a range of other decisions by photographers, and presenting them with contrasting arguments re the potential or problematic of digital imagery for photojournalism and social documentary. I showed them examples of conscious politically motivated editing out of people from photographs in 1930s Russia (The Commissar Vanishes - stalinist Russia) and they have readings about similar USA photo manipulations.

We also considered the playfulness of some Indian popular photography which disregards conventional notions of realism for studio photos, applies ink and paint to photo's in a variety of ways and wedding collage-type pictures and brings home the extent to which a range of 'manipulations' s predate photoshop. They really enjoyed looking at the photos from Truth and Fictions, especially as they were also busy with Photoshop workshops and learning various techniques of how to combine different photos etc.

After this assignment, their larger research assignment starts and hopefully they'll be finding out and writing interesting things about local (South African) image alteration past and present and about photo's on the net.

warm regards,

Marijke.

