

Archaeology of a Scandal: The Curious Case of Stacy Kranitz

Stacy Kranitz is a photographer who has worked for ten years in Appalachia, USA producing an extensive body of work in which she questions the history and possibility of accurately representing place.

In 2012, CNN published a number of images by Kranitz under the title *Everyday Life in Appalachia*. It included images of the Ku Klux Klan and snake handlers. The series was badly received by ordinary and professional viewers alike, racking up an impressive amount of negative viewer comments and op-eds, some of which compared her work to the controversial 1972 movie *Deliverance*. Variations of this scandal and their associated responses recurred in 2014, 2015 and 2017.

I examine the negative reception of Kranitz' images as a case study in my paper. By mapping out the actors and institutions involved in the discussion of Kranitz' photographs, I show how a particular discourse on the representation of Appalachia has evolved, controlling who is and is not allowed to represent the area photographically and on what terms. By analysing the contents of the responses to Kranitz' imagery, I show how the negative reception of her work can be understood as a technology of power, a means to discipline an aberrant photographer. I further contend that Kranitz has responded to this negative reception of her photographs by offering in-depth interviews, talks and essays on the representation of Appalachia, and that these should be seen as an act of resistance against the existing discourse surrounding the correct representation of the region.

I hope to demonstrate in my paper that this case study is not limited to Appalachia, but can act as comparison material to any other situation in which the photographic representation of a place and its citizens is considered contentious by ordinary and professional viewers alike.