

MASSIMILIANO FUSARI'S PHD PROJECT

**AESTHETICS AND MONTAGE IN VISUAL CULTURES: A PRACTICE-ORIENTED PERSPECTIVE**

The PhD project *Aesthetics And Montage In Visual Cultures: A Practice-Oriented Perspective* addresses the issue of visual culture codification, analysis and interpretation.

The PhD literature review will question established perspectives on the relationship between social sciences and visual cultures, with particular attention paid to the epistemology of anthropology generally and visual anthropology specifically. Following this analysis, I intend to articulate a new paradigm, taking into full account the role of aesthetics in visual culture codification, while, at the very same time, explore how editing processes and *Montage* contribute to interpretative processes. The first result is to re-assess the relevance of *parole* over *langue* (De Saussure's 1916 *Course in General Linguistics*) in order to re-affirm the epistemological order of practice-based and practice-oriented research. Using a field-work based visual exploration of the Hawza system as a case study, the ultimate aim is to explore, practically, and *only after that* theoretically, a format of how cultures and identities are constructed and communicated.

The main language of codification, analysis and interpretation will be the photographic: discourses (mainly with reference to Foucault's methodology and epistemology) will be developed through the photo-essays I will shoot during fieldwork in 2010 and 2011. Other languages (mainly but not only the audio and the textual) will support the photographic as large captions do with pictures. The relation between the visual and the textual/audio will also be part of the theoretical analysis. Nevertheless, the pivotal element of the research will be how aesthetics (mainly with reference to Eco's 1962 *Opera Aperta*) and *montage* (mainly with reference to Sergei Eisenstein's comprehensive stand) processes influence any codification, analysis and interpretation process. Issues in critical theory, media studies and communication analysis will contribute to the theoretical framework that will be built upon my professional background as a photographer. The final step of the PhD research will be to assess how to best represent the fully potentialities of the visual within contemporary media channels of communication through an innovative Web-based format inspired by Gilles Peress' NYT project on Bosnia.

A first perspective will be theoretically built up upon my 3-month fieldwork starting in January 2010 in Syria addressing the everyday life in Damascus Hawzas. This first draft will be presented by June 2010 at the British Academy project workshop on "Clerical Authority in Shi'i Islam" directed by Professor Robert Gleave.