In my PhD I explore the work of Allan Sekula, Martha Rosler, Fred Lonidier and Phet Steinmetz – known as the San Diego group – during the 1970s when they all studied, and later taught, at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). Through a contextual survey of group’s work, I aim to show how they offered a critique and a reinvention of documentary practices in relation to the advent of neoliberalism.

A HISTORY OF THE SAN DIEGO GROUP

RESEARCH QUESTION
MY WORK QUESTIONS PREVALENT ART-HISTORICAL NARRATIVES CONCERNING THE POST-MODERN ART AS THE CULTURAL LOGIC OF NEOLIBERALISM, ASKING WHY THE WORK OF THE GROUP AND THEIR MODE OF CRITICAL DOCUMENTARY HAS LONG BEEN OVERLOOKED.

As I show, their critique-and-reinvention of the documentary – in releasing it from its dependency on the ‘myth of photographic truth’, in their expansive use of media, exploration of the archive, notions of performativity, and photomontage – prefigures recent debates and artistic practices.

APPROACH

- The need for a revised history of the advent of so-called postmodern art and its fraught relation to realist and documentary practices.
- Demonstrating a direct relation between political-economic changes in the 1970s, such as the global economic crisis and changes in labor-process, and the representation of labor in works by the group’s members.
- Exploring their performativ understand of the photographic image and their critique of photojournalism, and its relation to more recent artistic practices.